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Disciplining the Popular:

New Institutions for Argentine Music Education as Cultural Systems

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Disciplining the Popular:

New Institutions for Argentine Music Education as Cultural Systems

by

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Disciplining the Popular:

New Institutions for Argentine Music Education as Cultural Systems

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This dissertation focuses on a recent but growing movement in Argentina, state-sponsored formal institutions of popular music education. The musics taught in these schools – tango, jazz, and Argentine folk idioms – have historically been excluded from the country's formal music education systems. Recent moves to standardize and legitimize these musics in this new institutional context raise questions of canon formation, pedagogical praxis, aesthetics and musical meaning that have implications far beyond the classrooms where they are implemented. I examine two of these schools based in and around the capital city of Buenos Aires: the Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda, and the Tango and Folklore department of the Conservatorio Superior de Música "Manuel de Falla." I adopt an ethnographic approach that considers broad structural and policy issues of power distribution, state intervention, and cultural nationalism. I also examine how these structures play out in discourse and practice within and beyond the classroom, shaped by and in turn

shaping students' and teachers' aesthetics, politics, and subject positions. I then analyze the output of several musical groups composed of current students and recent graduates of these programs, exploring the notion of an emerging institutional aesthetic and the extent to which these institutions act as homogenizing influences or engender creative divergence. Finally, applying Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a field of cultural production, I question the extent to which this new "*música popular*" is truly popular, ultimately arguing that it occupies a sort of third space between mass culture and high culture, replicating some avant-garde assumptions about the role of art as anti-commercial, yet simultaneously embracing a symbolic economy that valorizes populist and subaltern identities and ideologies.

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Introduction

October 4, 2006: A Musical Protest

The hand-painted signs and posters have been hanging in the school hallways all week: "Friday, 3PM. Classes are suspended – everyone join the march!" At the given time, the narrow hallways and tiny common space in the Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda (EMPA, hereafter) are abuzz with activity. Students and teachers alike hand out photocopied stacks of flyers summarizing their complaints to disperse along the way, while others assemble larger banners or gather musical instruments. A short period later, the group – about sixty participants in total, including many teachers and even the school's two top administrators[1] – descend into the street. They unfurl their banners and block traffic across Avenida Belgrano, one of the main thoroughfares of Avellaneda, an industrial, working-class suburb just south of the Argentine capital city of Buenos Aires. We march slowly, stopping frequently, preceded and followed by a few students in charge of a barrier of old tires that they drag along to prevent incensed drivers from approaching too closely. Banners and signs bear slogans such as "Budget for Our Education Now!" "Public Education for All," and "EMPA Teachers in Solidarity." Those not carrying signs play instruments, principally the booming *tamboriles*, barrel-shaped drums that play in incessant

[1] In fact, these administrators' presence was later roundly criticized by several of the student and faculty groups involved. Among their many complaints were these same officials' behavior and administrative style. For a more complete discussion of power relationships and conflict between the teachers and students and their administrators, see Chapter 3.

candombe[2] rhythms, although participants join in with any number of percussion instruments temporarily purloined from the school's equipment closet: shakers, Brazilian *pandeiros* and *tamborims* and snare drums. Several brass players from the school's jazz program intersperse loud, improvised interjections. As the group progresses, turning onto one of the city's inner, one-way streets, four flutists, struggling to be heard, superimpose a well-known *carnavalito,*[3] "El humahuaqueño," over the *candombe* drummers. Halfway down the street, several of the older teachers point out the primary school at number 36, a dilapidated building dwarfed by the tenement-block housing on either side. The school had been EMPA's first home, an overcrowded, leaky building shared with a preschool during the day. In 2001, the school had been shut down by a *toma*, or "take" where students occupied the building for several months and prevented classes from taking place to protest the inadequate space and resources the provincial government had afforded the school. The protest had culminated in the government buying a plot of land and designating it for construction of a new building, and renting a larger facility in the mean time. Five years later, construction has yet to begin on the new building, and that new rented space has become inadequate as well. "Nothing has changed," I hear one marcher say. "The same promises from the officials, but nothing has changed." As if on cue, it begins to rain.

The march had been planned to culminate in a concert in the main plaza in Avellaneda, an event to drum up public support for the school's cause. Pre-empted by the

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[2] *Candombe* is a polymetric ensemble drumming style mainly associated with carnival parading groups in Montevideo, Uruguay (Aharonián 2007a, 99-112). Originally practiced mainly by Afro-Uruguayans, it has become popular with a principally young, bohemian set of musicians in Argentina as well (Domínguez 2008). The musicians in this case were clearly of the latter category.

[3] A *carnavalito* is a festive, frequently pentatonic folk dance genre in binary meter from the northwestern region of Argentina with strong connotations of indigenous or mestizo cultural identity. It also exists in mass-mediated pop and pop-folk versions, however. For a complete discussion of folkloric music and the emergence of "*folklore*" as a mass-mediated popular genre, see Chapter 2.

rain, the marchers hurriedly cover instruments in coats and begin the walk back to the school. Instead, we all pile into the school's "auditorium" – in reality, just a slightly larger classroom with an improvised stage at one end – for a several-hours-long assembly where students and teachers debate the next plan of action.

Cultural Politics and the Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda

The Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda became the first popular music school in Argentina's state-sponsored conservatory system when it opened in 1986. Originally conceived of as a supplement to the classical conservatory system and a way to lend institutional credibility and cultural capital to genres of popular music (tango, jazz and Argentine folk idioms) that had long been excluded from the conservatories, over the course of its existence the school has gradually come to occupy a position of opposition to the very institutions that oversee it: the provincial conservatory system and government more broadly. Such a move has been possible partially because of the school's increasing visibility and influence in the local music culture; not only have EMPA graduates gone on to critical and public recognition as professional musicians and innovators in their genres, but the school has served as a model for similar institutions both within Argentina and in Latin America more broadly.

The day's course of events described above – a political, grassroots musical protest that exist partly inside and partly outside the official institutional structure of public music education – was in many ways typical of the year I spent observing and participating in classes at the EMPA. The school ostensibly exists as an institution through which the state

can support the production of Argentine *música popular*.[4] Yet frequently the only music that EMPA members was made was a means, rather than an ends: a form of public discourse deployed in the interest of bringing attention to the state's failure to act as steward of the education of its citizens. The cheerfully chaotic pastiche of musical styles and instruments that the EMPA students created was not intended as a public performance of music for entertainment or as art; the conditions (in the school just as in the weather) precluded any such luxury. Instead, this music served as a communally constructed, communally experienced sonic expression of the political needs and desires of a particular group of people. This community had formed around and through particular styles of music and shared ideas about that music. On the day of the protest those same styles of music, deployed simultaneously, chaotically, and disruptively in the public sphere carried complicated and multiple meanings. On one hand, they served to celebrate and vindicate the complexity and flexibility of the musical styles themselves, the capacity of the student musicians playing them, and in turn the success of the school as an educational project. But on the other hand, these sounds and people were also deliberately, provocatively wrong – out of place, symbolically forced into the street by the inadequacies of the space, equipment and funding in their state-sanctioned institutional home.

While the sonic pastiche that afternoon was not representative of any one of the musical aesthetics or styles officially taught in the EMPA curriculum, it was demonstrative of an approach shared by many of the school's students and teachers, where musicians deploy an eclectic array of musical symbols of the popular in the service of a populist politics. As

[4] The term *música popular* denotes a slightly different concept than its English equivalent. I will explain those differences, and the specific, narrower sense of the Spanish term in this local context, at the end of this introduction.

several members of the EMPA observed to me over the course of my stay there, the school often functioned less as an *escuela de música popular* – a music school for teaching popular styles – than it did as an *escuela popular de música* – a populist and politically engaged music school. And for a good portion of the ten months (October 2006 to July 2007) that I spent observing and participating in classes and other activities at the school, political mobilization took up more of everyone's time and energies than did studying or teaching music, as the student body and faculty unanimously voted to strike, suspending all class activities to protest the unworkable facilities and conditions within the school.

While the school had originally been developed as a supplemental program for conservatory-trained musicians to learn popular styles, it had evolved to become something much more removed from the conservatory model. The EMPA has, in twenty-two years of history, endured a precarious existence without the benefit of a permanent space to accommodate its student body, without enough instruments and equipment, and sometimes even without basic necessities such as cleaning supplies and light bulbs. The period that I spent observing and participating in its activities was a particularly turbulent one. But even so, teachers who had been at the school for a decade or more, and students and graduates of the program repeatedly insisted that the chaos, the internal and external political struggle and the infrastructural difficulties were more the rule than the exception.

Yet somehow, despite all these troubles, the EMPA has been the starting place for an impressive variety of successful and innovative musical careers. It is not an exaggeration to say that a significant majority of successful jazz and tango musicians under age 40 active today in Buenos Aires have had some degree of contact with the school, either enrolling there, studying privately with EMPA teachers, or teaching there themselves. Somehow,

amidst (and maybe, to a degree, even because of) all the chaos, the politically charged atmosphere, and the precariousness of the institution itself, the EMPA community has produced a generation of musicians with both the technical facility and the creative capacity to develop unique voices and respected positions in the Argentine *música popular* scene.

This dissertation's point of origin lies in a fascination with that contradiction. How does an emerging cultural initiative develop the stability to become a cultural institution in the wider public sphere? And how do the ways that an institution organizes itself, from the legal, political and infrastructural level down to the level of classroom praxis, pedagogical approaches, repertoire, and interpersonal interaction, affect the kinds of music that students end up producing, and the ways they think about that music and about themselves as musicians?

While the EMPA was the first school in Argentina to attempt such a project,[5] there have been many others that have followed it, each taking slightly different approaches to all of these questions. In order to begin to understand how different institutional cultures, even when organized around the same musical genres, might produce significantly different results, this study will examine two of these schools in tandem: the EMPA and the more recently developed program described below.

[5] Some of these genres – *folklore* in particular – *have* been taught in Argentine schools prior to the EMPA's opening, but to my knowledge no such institution, devoted exclusively to popular music styles, existed prior to it. The social history of these genres in Argentina, including their relation to formal music education, in Argentina, is the focus of Chapter 2.

July 18, 2007: A Toned-Down *Peña*

It is the last week of the semester in the tango-folklore program of the Manuel de Falla Municipal Conservatory ("the Falla," hereafter) in the Argentine capital city of Buenos Aires. Word has gotten around to the various classes that the program's artistic director, Juan Falú, has declared that the last day in his "Elements of Folklore" class will be devoted to a *guitarreada* – an informal jam session where students and teachers alike come to play and dance. Several other classes join in immediately, and individual students in other classes beg off to join them. By the time the arranging class that I am observing joins in, there are already more than forty students crowded into the Salón Pugliese, the building's main classroom. There are five or six guitars that change hands frequently, as do the room's two grand pianos, and three students play *bombos* – the large wooden double-headed drums most associated with the folk music of the Argentine northwest. Twenty or more students in two long parallel lines dance the lively *chacareras* and *gatos* that their classmates are playing, replicating the steps that many learned in the folk dances class that forms part of the school's formal curriculum.

After about an hour (and perhaps not coincidentally when Falú, the director, has momentarily disappeared), several students begin to play a *cumbia*, a popular dance genre introduced in Argentina by Colombian musicians in the early 1960s. The lines of students break into pairs of dancing couples, and one cumbia follows another. These are not tunes that the students learned in the school; they are far more commercially popular currently than any of the genres presented in the folklore curriculum. Many of the students enthusiastically sing the ribald lyrics to "*Bombón asesino*" ("Killer ass"), a hit cumbia tune at the time, that they likely learned from the same places I did – the radios ubiquitous on buses,

in supermarkets and other public spaces. Before long, someone dims the lights and the genre changes again, this time to tango. Five or six couples pair up and begin to dance as their classmates play well-known tangos *a la parrilla* – without arrangements, spontaneously taking melody roles and improvising stock accompaniment rhythms. Again, the older students have all taken the semester-long required class in tango dance, and demonstrate a modest but competent repertoire of choreographic figures, improvising and following the impromptu ensemble's rubatos.

Somewhere in the course of the genre switching, Juan Falú has reappeared, as have several other teachers. Eventually, the dancing stops and students and teachers group together at one end of the long classroom in a circle, the mood having calmed perceptibly. Several students return from the corner store with large bottles of Coca-Cola and orange juice – a capitulation to the municipal conservatory's central authorities, who had complained about the presence of red wine at previous gatherings. The bottles pass from hand to hand around the room, everyone drinking directly from them. Smaller groups of two or three students sing *zambas* and *vidalas* – slower, frequently somber folk genres – harmonizing extemporaneously. After each piece, the group applauds and one of the most recent performers calls out another of his or her classmates to perform next, often citing a specific song that they are known to play or sing well. Finally, students pass two of the guitars to Juan Falú and Juan Quintero, another teacher in the program and a well-known performer in his own right. The group quiets down, attentive, and several students pull out flash-drive audio recorders to document the performance. With no prior discussion, Quintero begins to sing a *vidala,* accompanying himself with a sparse, sometimes harmonically indeterminate guitar line. Falú joins him, interspersing brief, improvised guitar

melodies of his own and occasionally joining vocally in parallel harmony at phrase ends. After one more tune – a *zamba* this time – Quintero leaves, and Juan Falú begins to call on individual students to sing, while he accompanies. He insists that students choose songs and keys that are comfortable to them, and adapts his own playing to suit their ranges and particular styles.[6] At precisely 10:15 pm, Marta Sima, the program's administrative overseer, appears at the classroom door. She announces that the building employees have to leave, and the *guitarreada* is disbanded, students and teachers alike filing for the exits somewhat reluctantly.

Many students and teachers, over the course of interviews about their experiences in the Falla tango/folklore program, reminisced fondly about the first years of the program's existence, when they were able to organize *peñas* – regularly scheduled, yet loosely structured gatherings for folkloric music performance and dance – in the school itself, where students and teachers would often play and dance, fueled by *empanadas* and bottles of red wine, until dawn. The legality of such practices had since been challenged, however, and the semester-end impromptu *guitarreada*, with its no-alcohol restrictions and enforced curfew, was one of many compromises that the school's officials and students had developed in adapting popular and folkloric cultural practices and mores to an institutional context.

The tango/folklore program is only one of several independent programs that fall under the aegis of the Conservatorio Municipal, including a classical program, a jazz program, an early music program, and an ethnomusicology program. All of these distinct areas offer entrance only to students who have completed the *Ciclo Básico* – an introductory,

[6] For a more in-depth analysis of the power structures of these spontaneous interactions, and the cultural capital of wide repertoire knowledge and adaptability, see chapter 4.

typically four-year course of study in classical music. The tango/folklore program has a relative degree of autonomy from the central administration, including a separate faculty and separate courses,[7] and is housed in a building shared only with the jazz program[8] (although during different hours, so there is little overlap). Nonetheless, in its current form the Falla program functions much more in the way that the EMPA was originally intended: as a professional training in tango and *folklore* styles for already competent, classically trained musicians. It is a radical departure from the classical conservatory system in terms of its curriculum, but the structures of that system remain intact. The program was in its fourth year of existence at the time of my field work there so it had yet to graduate its first cohort. While it is too early, then, to assess the lasting impact the Falla's tango/folklore graduates may have on Argentine *música popular*, it is clear that many of the advanced students are already creating and performing at a very high level of artistic accomplishment.

The Popular vs. the Institution

The two schools in which the events portrayed above took place are part of a growing movement in Argentina and in Latin America more broadly: they are state-sponsored, degree-granting institutions devoted to training popular musicians. When the EMPA opened its doors in 1986, it claimed to be the first institution of its kind in Latin America. By the time of my field work, in the province of Buenos Aires alone there were six such programs, offering either *terciario* (post-secondary, non-university programs typically

[7] Some of the required academic coursework, such as language classes and Sociology/Anthropology of the arts, is shared with the ethnomusicology program.
[8] Subsequent to the completion of my field research these programs were transferred to the centralized space that is shared with the classical program, a development that the students, teachers and administrators that I spoke with uniformly lamented. See Chapter 4.

associated with a trade, in this case music performance) or *universitario* (more academically oriented university-level programs) degrees. In early 2007, representatives from both of the schools in this study were among those presenting at the First Latin American Congress on Academic Training in Popular Music at the Universidad Nacional de Villa María, a conference that attracted 330 scholars and practitioners from six Latin American nations (www.uvnm.edu.ar).

The rapidly growing popularity of this educational model does not, however, guarantee its success or stability. In fact, even its advocates recognize that the very notion of institutionalizing and standardizing popular art forms is fraught with contradictions and potential downfalls: one of the Villa María conference's organizers claimed that its central purpose was to "posit the great dilemma [of] how to train university [students] in *música popular* without denaturing it."[9] The idea that formalized instruction of a musical genre or genres could denature (*desvirtuar*) it – depriving it of its virtue or essence –shows a fundamental anxiety about the very feasibility of combining the institutional and the popular, an anxiety that was common among the teachers in these programs.

These anxieties contrast sharply with the attitudes found within the Western conservatory system. This system, which has long been the dominant model for music education in Argentina, is one that Bruno Nettl has likened to a "society ruled by deities with sacred texts, rituals, ceremonial numbers, and a priesthood" (Nettl 1995: 5). The members of this quasi-sacerdotal class, the teachers within these schools, rarely express any concerns about the conservatory posing a danger to the music taught there. Of course, this is largely

[9] "La intención . . . es justamente plantear el gran dilema: cómo formar en la universidad en música popular sin desvirtuarla" (Silvia Aballay, personal communication to Coriún Aharonián, quoted in Aharonián 2007b).

because the conservatory system actually developed around, and in turn served to construct, the set of beliefs about Western art music that its practitioners share. The affinities between the institutional structure and the set of beliefs held by the music culture include a strict sense of social hierarchy, a respect for tradition and lineage, a circumscribed social and aesthetic space for creativity and deviation from established norms, and a musical ontology that is highly scriptural, placing ultimate aesthetic authority in the written score (Nettl 1995, Kingsbury 1988).

All of these factors run counter to the social practice of *música popular*. This, I believe, is the source of the anxieties that the musicians and scholars alike expressed at the Villa María conference. It is also at the heart of the set of questions I hope to address in this study: Can the Western conservatory model serve as an effective institutional framework for teaching popular musicians? To what extent do these schools change or challenge that framework in ways beyond the repertoire in the curriculum, and to what effect? What do the codifying and standardizing effects of a shared popular music education in a genre do to the way that genre is produced outside of the school setting? Can the social values of *música popular'*– individuality, idiosyncrasy, creativity, experimentation[10] – be systematically taught in an institutional setting? Finally, assuming that these musics can find (or have found) an effective institutional home and a new legitimacy in the eyes of the state and other hegemonic cultural institutions, to what extent is this '*música popular'* still truly popular?

[10] These attributes are among those identified by students and teachers in these schools as intrinsic to the music culture. They stand, of course, in stark contrast with many of the critiques leveled at popular music by early critics, particularly Adorno. I will discuss in the following section the differences, as I understand them, between "popular music" in the sense it is most commonly used in English-language scholarship and *'musica popular'* as it is used as a 'native' or 'endodiscursive'(Turino 2003, 203) term.

Locating "the popular"

The last of these questions is difficult to answer meaningfully without a clear understanding of what we mean by the "popular" in popular music, or popular culture more broadly. This is a deceptively complicated question, as the term is deployed in vernacular, political, and academic discourse in overlapping, but distinct ways. One of the common threads one finds in attempts to define the term is a tendency to do so oppositionally, or by defining what it is not. One of the earliest scholars to propose a definition for popular culture, the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, took this tack, producing an aphorism frequently repeated in the Latin American literature on folklore: "the popular is everything that is not official."[11] For Mauss, then, institutionalization of popular culture would likely signify nullification, or at least a fundamental change of meaning, of that culture.

Mauss' formulation may have been heuristically useful as a way for early scholars of folklore and non-elite expressive culture to get beyond an increasingly irrelevant rural/urban binary as the material and epistemological consequences of late modernity became more widespread. Also, it does nicely highlight the tensions inherent in creating a popular institution discussed above. But Mauss' framework is less useful for the purposes of formulating interesting questions about the particular cases at hand for two reasons. First, it cannot adequately address the factor of populist, yet authoritarian political institutions such as the Peronist party, which have long had a shaping presence in Argentine popular culture.[12]

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[11] "*est populaire tout ce que n'est pas oficiel*" / *"es popular todo lo que no es oficial*." Mauss clearly embraces this concept in several works, yet I have been unable to locate this precise phrase in his published works. Nonetheless, it was frequenty being attributed to him among Spanish-speaking folklorists by the 1940s; Carlos Vega (1944: 29) calls it a "celebrated and oft-repeated phrase [by] Mauss;" Poviña (1957:23) also reproduces it verbatim with the same attribution in a Spanish-language ethnology manual based on Mauss's *Manuel d'ethnographie*.

[12] Peronism's significant effects on Argentine popular culture, and political cultural populism, are discussed at lengthin Chapter 2.

Secondly, "the official" is too broad and vague a term to begin to address the multiple and intersecting sources of power that seek to shape, control, or co-opt "the popular." Specifically, in the post-dictatorship period[13] in Argentina when these schools of popular music begin to emerge, it would be overly simplistic to elide, for example, the interests of the state and those of national or international capitalism. And even "the state" is itself a problematic term: governmental bodies at the local, provincial, and national level pursue separate and sometimes conflicting agendas (O'Donnell 1993). Even in the cases where these interests converge, in the wake of a brutal dictatorship the level of popular mistrust in strong, centralized government control is high, and as Nicola Miller observes about late-20th'century Latin America generally, it is important "not to over-emphasize the strength of the state" in post-dictatorship Argentina (Miller 1999, 52).

Neo-Marxist critical perspectives on popular culture, from the Frankfurt school of the early twentieth century to the British school of cultural studies starting in the early 1980s, have tended to emphasize the capitalist culture industry, rather than the state, as the principal threat to "the popular." Frankfurt school scholars, particularly Theodor Adorno, were sharply critical of "mass culture", claiming that urbanization, industrialization, and the capitalist culture industry have corrupted the possibility for vernacular cultural practices to form the basis of a counter-hegemonic ideology. Instead, the masses are provided with trite, formulaic commodities that serve only as distractions and to further alienate them and entrench them into their class roles (Adorno 1941). So pervasive and totalizing was the

[13] The most recent military dictatorship in Argentina, popularly known as "El Proceso," lasted from 1976 until 1983. It was characterized by a brutally violent imposition of strict social order, killing an estimated 30,000 Argentines who were accused of opposing the regime, and economic policies favorable toward international capital, often at the expense of both local business interests and the working class.

culture industry's effect on vernacular culture, Adorno believed, that it negated whatever counterhegemonic or vindicationalist potential may once have existed in pre-capitalist vernacular culture.

> There is no longer any "folk" left whose songs and games could be taken up and sublimated by art. The opening up of the markets together with the effect of the bourgeois rationalization process have put the whole of society -- even ideologically -- under bourgeois categories (quoted in Paddison 1996, 83).

Adorno's bleak vision of the culture industry was an important contribution, providing useful and trenchant insight into the potentially insidious ideology of entertainments that otherwise may have seemed innocuously banal. And as I argue in Chapter 4, many aspects of his critique of popular music have in fact been absorbed and reproduced, ironically, by teachers within these schools of popular music. Where Adorno's analysis is less useful is in providing any guidance of a potential way forward for populist would-be cultural producers and scholars, a shortcoming that led George Lukács to famously quip that Adorno resided in the "Grand Hotel Abyss," providing comfortably intellectual niceties but little by way of prescriptive direction (Lukács 1974, 22).

British cultural studies scholars have been comparatively less pessimistic about the lower classes' lack of agency in the cultural arena. The so-called Birmingham school approach has been characterized by a more nuanced understanding of popular culture that reflects, and exists within, the subjugated position of the working classes in industrial capitalist society. This approach has generally started by questioning Adorno's assumption that the popular classes only relationship to "mass culture" is that of passive and uncritical consumers who treat cultural products as fetish objects, thereby strengthening the hegemonic ideology that naturalizes their own subjugated position within it.

Instead, authors such as Stuart Hall and John Fiske recognize, like Adorno, that "there is no whole, authentic, autonomous 'popular culture' which lies outside the field of force of the relations of cultural power and domination" (Hall 2006: 447). Nonetheless, they argue that the culture industry does not have total control over the *uses* and *meanings* that are generated around commodities, and furthermore these uses and meanings have been important grounds where counterhegemonic cultural work is done (Fiske 1991: 5-15). Fiske recognizes that a simple binary that reduces all cultural production to either hegemonic or resistant fails to take into account the internal contradictions latent in an expressive culture that uses the products of a system to oppose that same system:

> Popular culture is the culture of the subordinated and disempowered and thus always bears within it signs of power relations, traces of the forces of domination and subordination that are central to our social system and therefore to our social experience. Equally, it shows signs of resisting or evading these forces: popular culture contradicts itself. (Fiske 1991:4-5)

These same tensions and contradictions are certainly present in the cultural project of conservatory-model teaching of popular music. But the picture, in this case, is even more complicated. Cultural studies approaches have generally focused exclusively on the *uses* of mass culture commodities, including recorded music, but have not directed nearly the same attention to the processes of *production* of new popular cultural forms.[14]

This study, clearly, takes a different tack; I am centrally concerned with young popular musicians themselves (although they, too, are consumers) and the roles these schools are playing in their subject formation processes. That is to say, I

[14] Keith Negus (1999; 1992) has been one important exception in this regard; Robert Burnett (1996) has also considered the production process within the global music industry.

mean to explore the processes by which they are becoming popular musicians – processes that involve not only acquiring the technical skills and theoretical background to enable them to function as instrumentalists, singers, composers and arrangers in their chosen musical idiom, but also developing aesthetics, social codes, and awareness of the power relations and interests in the field of *'música popular'* production.[15]

In considering the processes at work in formation of these schools of popular music, ultimately I believe it is most productive not to think of "the popular" and "the institutional" (or "the hegemonic") simply as opposing interests. Rather, I understand the actors in these spheres of interest – students, teachers, administrators, government officials – to be engaged in an uneasy, circular choreography of symbolic, discursive, and even physical claims to positions that attempt to appropriate the authority (whether legal, economic, symbolic) from one of these interests without totally invalidating their claim on the other. There is an inherent tension in this flux, and it resolves itself (or fails to) in varied ways depending on context. When EMPA students and teachers in the march described above took to the streets in protest, they did so drawing on their shared experience as activists in grassroots, populist political movements. Yet they did so in pursuit of an agenda that would arguably expand, rather than disable, state-based hegemony: a bigger educational budget, permanent, higher-prestige official job descriptions for the teachers, and more permanent institutional home for their school. Students and

[15] I use the term "field" not only in the narrow, professional sense but following Bourdieu's notion of a "field of cultural production" which is situated within larger fields of power and class relations (Bourdieu 1993).

teachers at the Falla compromised on some aspects of *folklore* music culture in their semester-end *guitarreada*, circumscribing important aspects of its popular social context such as alcohol consumption and all-night performance in order to conform to institutional regulations. But their capitulation was not total, and the resultant social gathering maintained some aspects of that popular social context – oral-tradition transmission of repertoire, a (relatively) egalitarian performance context where students and teachers perform together, and the collectively, bodily experienced social pleasure of group dance – that would not have been possible in the traditional conservatory setting.

Popular music vs. '*música popular*'

I would like to draw an important distinction between the term "popular music" as it is used in most English-language scholarship and the narrower sense of the term *'música popular'* as it is deployed by the teachers and students at the two schools in this study. In this study I consistently use the term in Spanish where I wish to emphasize the "endodiscursive" sense of this emic concept (Turino 2003, 203) rather than reifying it as a scholarly or objective analytic category.[16] Early scholarly attempts to define popular music tended to emphasize its urban setting, as well as the emergence of an industry, mass mediation and a professional class of

[16] There is a significant body of Spanish-language musicological scholarship (e.g. González Rodríguez and Rolle 2005) that uses the term in ways that are quite similar to the ways it used in Anglo-American popular music studies. My use of language as the marker to distinguish between "popular music" as a scholarly, etic category and "*música popular"* as my interlocutors' construction of a narrower field is one of convenience. I do not mean to suggest that Spanish language scholars do not participate in the ongoing, multilingual and international field of popular music studies.

musicians dedicated to its production (Nettl 1972). These early studies of popular music as culture (e.g. Hebdige 1979; Middleton 1990) included important and sometimes trenchant observations about the need for new critical perspectives and analytical tools to understand popular music. But as Peter Manuel has observed, the discipline's particular focus on societies in the economic north closest to the centers of the global music industry led to understandings of popular music as a category that do not always adequately address the realities of popular musics produced by and for societies and markets further away or more peripheral to the flows of global capital. Nonetheless, Manuel also ultimately insists that "the most important distinguishing feature of popular music is its close relationship with the mass media" (Manuel 1988, 4).

In order to understand why these critical perspectives on popular music do not entirely align themselves with the local concept of *música popular,* we must now return to a level of ethnographic specificity. The two programs that are the focus of this study both teach genres of music that are mass-mediated, and have evolved "in close relationship with" the culture industry: tango, *folklore*, and jazz. But the ways in which these genres are constituted and perpetuated in schools through discourse, selective construction of a historical narrative, and musical aesthetics frequently emphasizes an anti-commercial ideology. Students and teachers alike, particularly at the EMPA, often identify *'música popular'* as a category not only distinct from '*música culta'* – "learned" (that is, "art") music but also from "*música comercial"* – a category much closer to "pop" in English, often glossed as music produced principally, or solely, to appeal to as wide an audience, and generate as large a profit, as possible.

There is a curious cognitive dissonance present in this argument: most of these students and teachers acknowledge that they would be delighted if their own music were to reach mass levels of commercial success, and acknowledge the commercial success of some the artists whose work forms the emerging canons in these programs, but argue that seeking such success as an end in itself necessarily compromises the artistic validity of the project in question. And while mass-mediation and both local and international players in the music industry have certainly shaped the musical genres that they study, I believe that these musics today exist in a sort of peripheral space only partially shaped by those industries. Several important factors have served to undermine the influence of large national and international record labels: the widespread piracy of recorded music (both by for-profit local distributors and through the informal networks of friends, teachers, and even the "official" libraries of some music schools!); the greater degree of accessibility to music recording, production, and dissemination technologies; and the proliferation of small and even clandestine informal venues for the live performance of these musics.[17]

What I propose, then, is to study these genres of popular music not only as commodities, but also as vernacular, performed culture. I am interested in the locally specific ways that popular musicians make music and social meaning in the

[17] In December of 2004, a fire during a rock concert in the Buenos Aires nightclub "República Cromañon" resulted in the deaths of nearly 200 young fans when a pyrotechnic device set fire to the ceiling. The municipal government was severely criticized for failing to enforce fire codes, and in a backlash closed many small venues. As a result, many *peñas* and other small concerts that I witnessed during my field work, including performances by all three of the bands that are the focus of Chapter 5, took place in underground venues that had not passed code for public performances of music, including houses and neighborhood cultural centers with very limited audience capacity.

performance of genres that are shaped by the culture industry, but also by a variety of other microsocial determinants. My understanding of *música popular* is similar in this regard to Aaron Fox's approach to country music as "working-class art, some of the resources for which circulate as musical commodities." The intersection of these popular art forms with the capitalist culture industry is significant, of course, but that does not mean they are entirely circumscribed by it. And more importantly, the ethnographic approach to understanding these art forms in their social context involves a "view of what 'art' is [that] entails embedding aesthetics in a nexus of social conduct, discourse, and ideology" (Fox 2004, 31). I will situate the meanings that obtain to this music through these means through a sociohistorical examination of the genres in question in Chapter 2, and discuss the relationship between the production of *música popular* and wider political and economic forces in Chapter 6. But principally I am interested in the social practice of *música popular* rather than its significance in or to the capitalist culture industry.

Methodology

I first became interested in the role that these schools were playing in shaping current Argentine popular music during previous fieldwork on contemporary tango in Buenos Aires (O'Brien 2005). Although I did not initially expect educational institutions to form an important part of the local scene I was studying, it quickly came to my attention that the EMPA did play a number of key roles: it served as a social nexus where like-minded students met and formed groups that would later record and perform professionally; it served as a steady, if very modest, source of income for teachers whose careers as

performers and recording artists frequently generated critical respect but poor earnings; and its curriculum served as an initial point of aesthetic encounter between generations of musicians. I began this project, then, with an understanding of these schools not as autonomous, bounded cultures unto themselves, but rather as nodes where myriad individual actors with divergent interests, ideologies, and purposes converged, and the resultant interactions sometimes had implications in the wider cultural sphere. Like Kingsbury (1988), I am less interested in writing an ethnography *of* a school (or schools) than an ethnography *in* a school, considering the ramifications of that institution more broadly.

The bulk of my time was spent within these schools as a participant-observer. I sat in academic classes (music history, theory, arranging techniques, ethics and ontology of art) taking notes and asking questions alongside other students, played in instrumental ensembles, and observed group and individual instrument lessons. I was equally interested in the informal social contexts that the institution generated, the conversations in the hallways while waiting for class to begin, or sharing gourds of hot *mate* in the school cafeteria where musical aesthetics and political ideology were performed every bit as much as in the classroom. I also observed, recorded, and occasionally played with groups of students and teachers outside of the school setting in *peñas*, concerts, or homes in order to understand the extent to which the experience of participating in these school communities played a role in their extracurricular (and often professional) musical lives. I draw from formal, recorded interviews as well as these informal conversations.

I am acutely aware of the imbalanced power relations between the groups of individuals who inform this study. Given the opportunities my questions raised for these individuals to express critical opinions, I wish to give space for those critical voices in this

text without endangering the professional, academic, or interpersonal situations of any of those individuals who generously agreed to contribute to this project. Along with imbalanced power relations, there are also varying degrees to which the individuals whose voices appear in this text constitute public figures. The schools in this dissertation appear under their real names. All of the authorities who cooperated with this project agreed that such publicity would be far more likely to be beneficial than harmful to the programs in question, and in any case these programs are unique enough that the details necessary to discuss them meaningfully would make them instantly recognizable to any reader familiar with the local scene. Taking that into account, the administrators and teachers of these institutions are *de facto* public figures whose identities are easily verifiable through a simple Internet search, and as such they will be identified by name. I offered all teachers in formal interviews the option to speak off the record at any moment, and in cases where they wished to share information anonymously, or in cases where I felt that a critical comment might do harm should it be traced back to its originator, I refrain from explicitly identifying him or her. Students' names are all fictitious, and occasionally other identifying information (year in program, instrument) may be changed as well to protect their confidentiality. The exception to this is Chapter 5, where I address the professional (or at least semi-professional) activities of three bands that have come out of these programs. Here too I believe that true anonymity would be impossible and would deprive these musicians of an opportunity all of them are keenly interested in: greater public exposure for their music.

Dissertation outline

The first chapter develops a case for the study of a music school as culture. Drawing on the ethnomusicological literature on cultural processes and institutions of music learning, I argue that schools serve as potent sites for the reproduction (or formation) of not only technical capacities but also ideologies, contributing not only to students' and teachers' professional formation but also subject formation. The school is one of the primary instruments through which the state often seeks to perpetuate hegemony, constituting its subjects according to its ideological and political needs. Music often plays an important role in these processes of national identity formation, and formal music education can seek to either constrain (Pillay 1994) or encourage egalitarianism, creativity, and experimentation (Hill 2005). But ethnographic analysis has also revealed that the formal curriculum never entirely encapsulates or constrains the musical activity that students engage in, and they can use the materials of that formal curriculum in sometimes surprising and inventive ways (Campbell 1998). Perhaps the closest analogue to these Argentine schools of *música popular*, however, in terms of the social spaces and discursive transformations that they have entailed, are the university and conservatory programs in jazz that have proliferated in the U.S. and in Europe during the last several decades. Scholarly approaches to this cultural phenomenon, drawn from musicology, ethnomusicology, and jazz studies professors themselves have informed my framing of this study. I conclude the chapter by examining some of these critical perspectives, drawing attention to the ways that historical narratives, issues of canon formation, and musical aesthetics were selectively constructed in order to conform to existing cultural practices and values within these school cultures, and the productive ways in which they sometimes diverged.

The second chapter examines the social history and discursive formation of the three genres of popular music – tango, *folklore*, and jazz – that comprise the curriculum in these two programs. Over the course of the twentieth century, both the music industry and the nation of Argentina underwent radical changes. During various periods tango and jazz, both seen as musical representations of a specific local cosmopolitan modernity, alternatively shared compatible social spaces and meanings during some periods, and competed for scant economic resources and public attention in others. "*Folklore*" -- an urban, mass-mediated popular music derived from rural pre-capitalist forms -- emerged as a semantically slippery musical discourse onto which political projects from the entire ideological spectrum inscribed their own visions of national and local identities. By the late 1960s, all three of these genres' moments of mass appeal had been eclipsed by rock and pop, and they began to find new meanings, new aesthetics, and new social spaces closely tied to a single audience: a left-leaning educated bourgeoisie and bohemian class. Here, there emerge a set of aesthetics and ideologies that draw simultaneously from a set of seemingly contradictory sources: anti-colonialist notions of valorizing local cultural forms and rejecting capitalist mass culture, European "high" cultural notions of autonomous art, complexity as an aesthetic ideal, and anti-commercialism. These three genres, drawn together in new ways by these emergent aesthetics and ideologies, can then converge in a single social space as a valid alternative to both the rock-centered pop music industry and the classical conservatory system when the EMPA is formed in 1986.

Chapter 3 examines the policies and power structures that shape these two schools as institutions. While I take a broadly Gramscian approach to the ways that hegemonic ideology is propagated through these institutions, I begin by questioning the adequacy of a

model of monolithic state hegemony to account for the political power dynamics in Argentina. Following scholars of political science, I argue that Argentina's political parties and state institutions have been governed less by ideology than by clientelist practices and networks, creating a culture of "weak state" hegemony that pervades large and small institutions alike. I trace these power structures and political interests at the national, provincial, and municipal level to account for the various extra-institutional interests that can shape these schools. I also examine the ways in which individual actors within the school system, particularly mid-level administrators, can serve to undermine or facilitate the cohesion of the institutional culture, drawing a sharp comparison between the EMPA director's often ineffective attempts to exert a strong centralized authority, and the role that the far more popular Falla's administrator plays as a pragmatic facilitator between teachers and the bureaucracy. I posit the notion that these very different relationships between administrators and the students and faculty can best be understood by recognizing two separate but intersecting systems of authority within these schools: the system of political authority, which is directly appointed and controlled by government regulation; and an informal and unwritten system of cultural authority.

That system of cultural authority is the focus of Chapter 4. In particular, I explore the ways that classroom praxis – musical and spoken discourse, the decisions to form a particular canon of repertoire, to emphasize a particular historical narrative, to choose a particular pedagogical approach – construct a social set of assumptions about musical aesthetics and ideology. Based both on participant-observation in the classroom and later interviews with teachers and students, I explore how both of these institutions have generated a set of often unspoken assumptions and even rules about how music ought to

sound, how it ought to be played, and how a musician ought to behave. I believe it is impossible to separate the notion of musical aesthetics from ethics, for the assumptions about how music ought to sound are based in notions of ideal social context for that music, which are in turn informed by musicians' understanding of themselves as actors in larger social webs of groups and power relations.

The fifth chapter attempts to determine the extent to which the aesthetics and ideologies promulgated within these institutions has lasting or significant impact on the students' activities as professional popular musicians. I offer an analysis of three bands: a tango group and a folklore group made up of EMPA graduates as well as a *folklore* ensemble led by current senior students in the Falla program. By analyzing these bands' live performances, recordings, and discursive self-representation, I argue that the EMPA program has encouraged students toward notions of their own music and *música popular* that are little concerned with the integrity or purity of genres and musical forms and are far more tied to an explicit political populism. While the Falla's students share with the EMPA grads a suspicion of commercialism and strong sense of self-identity as *popular*, this is more frequently expressed through constructing and exploiting informal means of social organization patterned on somewhat idealized notions of rural folkways (*peñas*, street performances) than on active participation in political organization in the public sphere. Furthermore, these students generally hold a more conservative attitude about the transgression of formal and generic conventions than do their EMPA counterparts, and a certain cognitive dissonance about their own urban identity and their notions of *folklore* as an organic expression of rural experience. All of these groups, however, do share a commitment to the notion of *música popular* as a populist and anti-commercial practice, which

they demonstrate by pursuing less commercial venues and media through which to create a public space for their music and a public role for themselves as artists.

In Chapter 6, I situate musical practices and products like those discussed in the previous chapter in the larger context of economic and political relations within and between cultural producers of various sorts. To do so I adopt and modify Bourdieu's concept of the field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993). I argue that '*música popular*' as it is discursively constructed in these schools and practiced outside of them by their graduates and teachers ultimately occupies a sort of third space between mass culture and elite culture. While these musics may no longer occupy a place of prominence in the consumption practices of the proletariat, they are to a certain extent shaped by the culture industry, mass mediation and particularly the listening and production practices that mass mediation has created. But they also adopt from the field of "autonomous" (elite) art notions of anti-commercialism and a sense of cultural capital that does not look to the elite for validation. Rather, they symbolically look downward, representing and vindicating notions of the popular classes that are celebratory and anti-authoritarian, but through a musical discourse that is most strongly shaped by bourgeois cultural assumptions.

Finally, in a brief conclusion, I summarize the main theoretical and methodological contributions I believe this study offers, including a dynamic understanding of institutions as cultures in flux and the need for a more critical and nuanced understanding of how the concept of "the popular" is deployed. I also assess the extent to which the findings from these case studies may be useful for conceptualizing or developing practical approaches to more inclusive and popular institutional music education.

Chapter 1: The music school as culture

Ethnomusicologists have long been concerned with processes of music learning as one important aspect of music culture. In fact, one of the most well-known methodologies in the discipline's history, performance study or apprenticeship to a master teacher, essentially uses the ethnographer's own experience as music learner as one of the primary means toward understanding musical aesthetics, process, and the social roles of the musician. While perhaps the best-known advocate of this approach is Mantle Hood and his call for "bi-musicality" (Hood 1960)as a research method, ethnomusicologists have been writing about their own experiences as music learners from at least as early as 1934 (Jones), and have yielded important insights into musics from Andean *sikuri* ensembles (Turino 1993) to Bulgarian *gaida* (Rice 1994) to North American jazz (Monson 1996).

Up until relatively recently, however, few ethnomusicologists have devoted serious attention to institutions of music learning as cultural systems in their own right. Scholars from both the fields of music education (Szego 2002; Campbell 2003) and ethnomusicology (Rice 2003) have noted this lacuna. In this chapter, I argue for the utility of the ethnographic approach to studying music education in institutional contexts. Perhaps the historic lack of attention to formal educational institutions as a site where cultures are negotiated, formed and performed stems from assumptions about these institutions' apparent internal consistency and logic. After all, the coin of the ethnographer's realm has long been the ability to bring analytical order to the seeming chaos of lived experience, whether that order be structural, hermeneutic, or theoretical. Are not bureaucratic institutions simply too deliberately designed, too self-evident to need any such interpretive

intervention? Or at best, are they not perhaps better suited to the purview of sociology's macro-analysis?

While I do not wish to minimize the necessity of such broad and systematic analysis, I believe that it would be shortsighted to take institutions' claims to organizational coherence, ideological consistency between discourse and practice, and self-awareness at face value. Rather, I agree with Georgina Born that the

> ethnographic method may have unique capacities to elucidate the workings of dominant western institutions and their cultural systems. Because these phenomena have the capacity to absorb and conceal contradiction, it takes a method such as ethnography to uncover the gaps between external claims and internal realities, public rhetoric and private thought, ideology and practice (Born 1995, 7).

Born demonstrated the legitimacy of this claim with a revealing study of the IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique) in Paris. If ethnography can reveal these fissures and contradictions even within stable, dominant "high culture" institutions such as Pierre Boulez's IRCAM, it is all the more revealing and necessary when the institution in question is less established, the legitimacy of its authorities more questioned, and the structures that shape the institutional culture still emergent or changing.

The experience of participating in the institutional cultures in the Falla and EMPA programs was nothing if not chaotic and unpredictable; students, teachers and administrators constantly adapted their plans and expectations based on changing factors ranging from transportation strikes and equipment failures to the presence of important visiting artists or teachers' performing and touring obligations. Ethnographic participant-observation in these institutional cultures allowed me to understand the flexible and dynamic ways that a set of formally defined educational principles and goals, as well as less explicitly articulated habitus

were interpreted and enacted on a daily basis as an everyday part of the experience of teaching and learning music in a formal setting.

In studying these popular music schools as music cultures, I have drawn upon theoretical and methodological models from two broad bodies of literature: from ethnomusicologists studying the culture of music teaching and learning, and from theorists of music education and of education more broadly who have tried to conceptualize ways in which educational institutions might provide spaces for counter-hegemonic subject formation even within the formalized, dominant educational system. This chapter will review the main ethnographic studies of institutions of music learning that have informed my approach, beginning with landmark studies of the Western conservatory, and following with studies that have illuminated some of the inherent contradictions and tensions in postcolonial contexts where the Western conservatory model becomes the institutional home for other music cultures and traditions. I will conclude with a review of the literature on the formation of university and conservatory departments of jazz studies in the U.S. and Europe, which I believe are the closest cultural analogue to the *música popular* schools.

Models: Ethnographies of music schools

Two of the first book-length studies to undertake ethnographic approaches to music schools both examine North American university programs dedicated to Western art music instruction. Henry Kingsbury's *Music, Talent, Performance*: *A Conservatory Cultural System* examines an unnamed East Coast conservatory. While Kingsbury's methodology is strictly ethnographic, comprising months of participant-observation in classes and interviews with conservatory students, teachers, and administrators, he nonetheless insists that his work is

"not intended… as an ethnography, in a technical sense, of an educational institution." The unit of analysis for Kingsbury is not the single school where he carried out his research, but rather the set of more broadly held cultural beliefs about the music that is taught there; it is "less an ethnography of a conservatory than… an ethnography of [a] music" (Kingsbury 1988: 13-14). Nonetheless, Kingsbury's study offers useful observations on the relationship between the political structures of the conservatory and the power dynamics that shape individual interactions within it.

Kingsbury draws a connection, for example, between the relatively decentralized political power structure of the conservatory, where professors enjoy a great deal of autonomy, and the high degree of respect accorded the individual, "genius" artist in Western art music culture. In Chapter 3 I discuss the similarly decentralized power structures of the Argentine popular music schools, and the relationship between those structures and a music culture that privileges creativity and individual idiosyncrasy.

This study also draws from Kingsbury's attention to the ways that power and aesthetics are intertwined. "Talent," Kingsbury argues, the ineffable sine qua non of cultural competence within the Western art music cultural system, is socially and discursively constructed. One can only be determined to have talent by a higher-status member of the system – frequently a teacher confers this status on a student – and the relative value of this determination depends upon the status of the conferrer. In any case, talent is understood to be an innate quality, fundamentally unalterable by practice or work, and thus its social construction and deployment become important ways of policing the boundaries of membership and power dynamics within the conservatory and the larger Western art music culture.

While I share Kingsbury's interest to the ways that power is deployed in the classroom through discourse about aesthetics, my discussion of these processes in Chapter 4 does not reach the same conclusions about the inevitability and inalterability of "talent" in students of *música popular*. Instead, I argue that the system of "cultural authority" allows for a more flexible sense of aesthetics, where once students display a base level of cultural competence, they are encouraged to develop their own individual aesthetic judgment, regardless of whether it corresponds to their teachers'. This fundamentally democratic assumption is, I believe, the strongest sense in which this educational system remains truly popular and populist.

In *Heartland Excursions,* Bruno Nettl examines a very similar institutional culture to that in Kingsbury's study. Nettl, though, takes a slightly different tack, examining the department of music at "Heartland University" – a composite, fictional department Nettl claims is based not on a single period of dedicated ethnographic fieldwork but rather on his five decades' experience studying and teaching in a variety of music departments in large state universities in the American Midwest. This approach allows Nettl, still active as a professor in a university department very much like the one he describes at Heartland University, to level gentle criticisms in a broadly structural manner without personally implicating colleagues or administrative superiors. In fact, while Nettl does trace the belief systems and taxonomy of musical values he outlines to a history of Eurocentric exceptionalism and colonialism, he is surprisingly ambivalent about his own role as critic. While he does acknowledge that he "would like to see change" in the music department's culture, he offers that he is "not sure from what to what" that change might be (Nettl 1995, 144). Furthermore, he argues that the notion that ethnomusicologists ought neither to

encourage nor discourage change in the societies that they study is something of an "article of faith" (144), even when that society is one's own. There is ample material in Nettl's analysis of the musical and cultural values implicit in the music school to mount a critique of this systems, notwithstanding the author's own hesitance to do so. Particularly relevant to this discussion is the role that the music school plays in mediating difference, maintaining a strict hierarchy where western European music of the "common practice" period is centrally important, while other musics (art musics of non-Western traditions, jazz, contemporary composers) are relegated to peripheral positions and some music (popular music, above all) is proscribed altogether. This attitude is if anything even more pronounced in the Argentine conservatory system than in Heartland University; many programs offer no curricula outside of the European art music repertory. As Coriún Aharonián, the Uruguayan musicologist and educator pointedly observes, the cultural and political ramifications of this policy in the postcolonial global south are even more fraught than they are in Nettl's case study:

> In [the postcolonial world] educators' responsibility is greater. Because if in the metropole, the intent to anchor oneself in the European past means a regressive option, for the colony it means the same thing in accentuated form, and furthermore constitutes an option of surrender. Bach is not Bolivia's past. The return to Bach in Europe means a return to their own 1700, but in Bolivia it means a return to someone else's 1700, that didn't exist in Bolivia because in 1700 they had not yet perfected the mechanisms of cultural emptying and substitution (Aharonián 2004, 3-4).

But can the issues of postcolonial Eurocentrism and exclusion be rectified simply by removing the canon central to conservatory education? The EMPA and Falla programs may serve at least partially as a corrective or alternative to the larger conservatory system, but they nonetheless function entirely within it. They share many of the same structures – the number, order and title of courses in a degree's course of study, in the case of the EMPA,

the administrative and governmental oversight in both cases, and even the school building in the case of the Falla – as their classical counterparts. By changing the core repertoire in the curriculum, are the *música popular* programs able to circumvent the issues of Eurocentric anti-populism latent in the conservatory system? Or are they merely replacing one canon with another without changing the underlying power structure? I believe there are two separate aspects of these issues that must be considered. First, to what extent are social relations within this institution different from their classical counterparts? How is political authority deployed, and toward what ends? Second, how does the symbolic economy (to use Bourdieu's terminology) of this cultural system interact with the larger world? What kind of cultural work does this music do in explaining the relationship between these musicians and the society in which they live? I address this first set of issues in Chapters 3 and 4, and the second in Chapters 5 and 6.

Although primarily a scholar of music education, Patricia Shehan Campbell has employed ethnography to uncover a fascinating and varied musical life among American elementary school children. Campbell explored the ways that children's lives outside of the music classroom were suffused with spontaneous, creative musical activity intertwined with nearly all of their daily activities. This activity referenced the music that the children learned in their structured school curriculum, as well as popular music and other sources, but frequently altered and recombined this material in original ways. In fact, Campbell observed these students in their school music classes and noted that the music teacher sometimes served principally to limit, rather than to encourage musical creativity, quelling spontaneous improvisation and experimentation during class exercises (Campbell 1998, 51-56).

Although this dissertation examines the musical lives of students considerably older, and geographically and culturally removed from the largely middle-class North American elementary school, it draws on Campbell's work both theoretically and methodologically. Like Campbell, I am interested not only in the structured musical activities that take place in the classroom, but more broadly in how the classroom experience affects the way students conceive, make, and speak about music in their daily lives. Campbell conducted individual interviews with students who had been identified by their teachers not for particularly salient musical ability, but rather their willingness to talk. In these interviews, fifteen of which are reproduced in their entirety, Campbell delves into the roles music making and listening play in students' home lives, their personal tastes and aesthetics as well as soliciting their opinions about the music they study in school. I took a similar tack, attempting in all my interviews with students and teachers to understand how the music school experience fit into the larger context of their musical lives, exploring the personal histories and circumstances that had led them to choose their particular course of study, the extent to which they were involved with outside projects, and the role music making and teaching played in generating their income. I specifically address the question of the lasting effect of *música popular* schooling in Chapter 5, where I examine the current musical activities of groups comprising graduates or senior students from both institutions.

Like Campbell, I too sought out interviewees based largely on their interest and willingness to talk rather than musical ability; I believe that the result is a cross-section of perspectives that, while not "scientific" or rigorously randomized, is a good representation of the range of individuals and viewpoints I encountered during my time at both schools.

The music school as an agent of sociocultural change

The studies mentioned above were useful in informing the theoretical and methodological design for this project, and for understanding the benefits and limitations of understanding a school as a culture. But Kingsbury and Nettl seek to understand an institutional culture that is well-entrenched, even hegemonic in the larger aesthetic and political landscape of U.S. educational policy and practice. The Argentine *música popular* programs enjoy neither the longevity and stability, nor the relative degree of financial and political support of their North American art music counterparts. Even the EMPA program, which is now over twenty years old, is still being debated and reformed, and its continued existence remains precarious. To the extent that these schools constitute cultural systems they remain, in Raymond Williams' terms, "emergent." The term is a slippery one, and it is worth reviewing Williams' own narrowly defined sense of the word:

> By 'emergent' I mean, first, that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created. But it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture (and in this sense 'species-specific') and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it: emergent in the strict sense, rather than merely novel. (Williams 1977, 123)

Williams' observation that the novel is not necessarily oppositional, and in fact can just as easily reify or be absorbed by dominant culture as challenge it, is certainly relevant here. In one sense, the emergence of music schools that valorize and validate cultural forms and practices that historically had been excluded from and even denigrated by the dominant music education system in Argentina is necessarily oppositional. But these schools were created within, and remain beholden to the same institutional confines – political, cultural,

curricular, and economic – of that dominant system. To what extent can the European conservatory system – a vestige of colonialist educational practices and values – serve as a model for educating young musicians in a populist and anti-colonialist cultural politics and aesthetics?

This question can be contextualized by exploring the ways in which the European conservatory system has served as an agent of sociomusical change in various postcolonial contexts. The Argentine schools of *música popular* are far from the first instance of an indigenous music culture assimilating (or assimilating to) the structures of the Western conservatory. In fact, the conservatory system, like many other aspects of the formal educational system, has been a common import from the West in many of its former colonies, and has been used as a further tool to perpetuate colonial cultural dominance or assimilation. Bruno Nettl observed that in pre-revolutionary Iran, for example, the government operated two parallel conservatories, one devoted to Western classical music and one to "national music," actually a hybrid program that included instruction in both traditional Persian music and instruments and in Western and mixed materials, possibly with the goal of encouraging the modernizing development of Persian styles. The Western program operated under no such pretensions of effecting change on the musical systems it taught. Furthermore, while students in the "national" track were exposed to and expected to learn both Western music and Persian music through Western methods, students studying the European repertory were not required to learn any Persian material at all (Nettl 1985, 74).

Soviet and other Communist countries were particularly active in creating state conservatory systems as part of the cultural nation-building project. In most cases, these

systems tended toward adopting Western techniques such as notation and large ensemble playing and codified pedagogical approaches, abandoning oral traditions and informal master-apprentice social relations in order to promote a modernized, "cleaned up" version of local folk traditions.[18] Deliberate modification, or even erasure, of musical practices and traditions seen as pre-modern or pre-Communist was often an explicit goal, and one that in most cases seems to have been largely successful. Tanya Merchant's study of the Uzbek State Conservatory, based on several years of field research undertaken as a student there, suggests that even in these cases of extremely active and authoritarian state intervention in a culture of music education, the new institutional structures are not entirely able to supplant the ways of making, transmitting, and thinking about music that preceded them. She observes that the conservatory department devoted to teaching of the traditional *shashmaqom* repertoire, founded in the 1960s, has brought about a pervasive turn toward the scriptural in a musical system that used to rely largely on oral transmission by master musicians with enormous memorized repertoires. Nonetheless, despite the enormous importance the school now places on Western-style notation, Merchant observes that there are "aspects of oral tradition lingering in the pedagogy," and that some aspects of the master-apprentice social relationship are retained even in the relatively more impersonal social setting of the state conservatory (Merchant 2005: 6, 159-160).

Similarly, participant-observation in the classrooms in the Falla and EMPA programs led me to discover the ways in which the scriptural and aural/oral practice and transmission of *música popular* are intertwined. Drawing largely from systems for teaching North American

[18] Prominent examples include China (Rees 2000; Stock 1996), Bulgaria (Rice 1994), and Uzbekistan (Merchant 2006).

jazz and popular music, including Berklee School of Music teaching materials and published method books, musicians in both of these schools develop fluency in Western musical notation (although the students may be less comfortable sight-reading than their peers in the classical conservatory) and chord symbol notation, but frequently treat musical notation as merely a form of mnemonic shorthand. As I discuss in Chapter 4, students in both of these programs as a rule seem to prefer playing from memory or by ear, even when working out new material, and many teachers do not emphasize the score as a source of authority, preferring to use recordings and oral-tradition demonstrations of material in class. The musical groups of graduates and senior students who I discuss in Chapter 5 also share these preferences; in all of these groups musical arrangements are worked out, whether communally or principally by one member, in the rehearsal setting and with little recourse to notated music.

In other cases, the installation of the Western conservatory system seems to have been intended not so much as a modernizing "corrective" meant to improve an indigenous musical tradition, but rather as something of a compromise necessary to ensure the survival of an otherwise endangered musical tradition, frequently threatened by Western-style modernity in the colonial state. In Morocco, for example, Philip Schuyler reported that as of the late 1970s the traditional master-apprentice model for learning Andalusian music had been largely supplanted by state-sponsored conservatory system installed by the French Protectorate in the 1930s. Schuyler claims that part of the reason they initially established the conservatory system was that the master-apprentice tradition was already unstable. It depended upon an often unattainable degree of interdependence and trust between both parties, and since master musicians often withheld at least some information from their

students in fear that the students would betray them, taking their work or refusing to support them as they aged, the master-apprentice tradition was already experiencing an "erosion of both the repertory and the mechanism for perpetuating it" by the 1930s (Schuyler 1979, 25). But the state-sponsored conservatory system was also a problematic and incomplete solution to this problem; when the mutually interdependent apprentice-master relationship was replaced with one where both teacher and student were instead beholden mainly to the state, "masters and pupils… divert[ed] more and more of their attention toward the administration and away from each other" and disengaged somewhat from the music learning process (Schuyler 1979, 27). Nonetheless, Schuyler's ethnographic research also revealed important gaps between institutional structure and practice, since students who advanced past the early years of conservatory training and gained their teacher's trust often entered into a relationship far more similar to the older master-apprentice model, meeting at the teacher's house to study privately and only returning to the conservatory for formal performances and examinations.

One trend common to these hybrid and "modernizing" conservatory projects – particularly those where a new emphasis on group instruction and notation replaced long periods of apprenticeship and memorization of a large oral repertoire – has been the increasing prevalence of musical amateurs. In cases such as those in Iran and in Madras, Nettl reported that the professional musicians, often trained in the traditional system, who made up the inaugural faculties at these new Western-style institutions often saw these new systems as inferior for training professional-class musicians, but a necessary compromise in order to keep their music culture's repertoire and performance alive at all (Nettl 1985, 75).

On the other hand, not all musical traditions later adapted to conservatory-style teaching institutions have been exclusively the provenance of a professional class of musicians. The questions of what a music culture stands to gain and to lose through codifying and institutionalizing processes of musical learning are different when the music culture in question values egalitarian participation over virtuosity or technical proficiency. Peter Cooke reports in a small study of community fiddle playing in the Shetland Isles that prior to the introduction in 1978 of fiddling classes in the local primary school, roughly one third of the youths in the community "could take a tune out of the fiddle" but that four years after the program began, only one of the original twenty students continued to play. Cooke surmises that the higher pressure to perform correctly in the formalized setting acted as a strong disincentive to musical participation, where the more relaxed and accepting setting of informal community music-making had encouraged a higher degree of participation (Cooke 1986).

The matter becomes even more complicated when institutionalization of a music tradition entails an explicit or implicit attempt to professionalize a musical tradition that previously had been largely informal and recreational. One particularly interesting and complicated scenario is that of the Folk Music Department of Finland's national Sibelius Academy, the subject of a dissertation by Juniper Hill. The term "folk," as in the case of *folklore* in Argentina, acquires a constellation of locally specific meanings here. Hill divides Finnish folk music into three large categories: the "ancient," consisting of the *kalevala* oral tradition epic poetry and related instrumental music, which has been reconstructed by folklorists and historians; the *pelimanni* music of a modern folk music revival, played largely by amateurs since the 1960s and consisting of dance genres from the 18th and 19th century

such as the polkas and the waltz; and the professional, often avant-garde experimental "contemporary folk" music that has largely been created in this new institutional space. The pelimanni folk music revival, unlike many of the global folk music revivals that were its contemporaries, was undertaken by musicians who were principally rural, strongly nationalist and politically conservative, and embraced a similarly conservative musical aesthetic based on historical accuracy and preservationism. The contemporary folk scene, by contrast, has been developed by educated, urban musicians promoting an "ideal musical process, an ideal way of being a folk musician, and an ideal relationship of folk music to contemporary society" (Hill 2005, 47). Students in the folk music department at the Sibelius Academy study improvisation, and are encouraged to use ancient and traditional instruments and folk materials in new, transformative arrangements, as well as to create their own compositions.

In some ways, this concept of idealized folk "authenticity" being more closely related toward *processes* of music making rather than specific repertoire, styles, or aesthetics, and more toward a musician's social role than toward his or her geographic origin are closely mirrored in the *folklore* program at both the Falla and the EMPA. EMPA *folklore* students play in ensembles that include electrified instruments alongside Spanish guitars and *charangos*, and play modified drum sets including *bombos* and other indigenous instruments; the Falla program emphasizes composition and performance equally, and all students are expected to produce new arrangements and original material. Nonetheless, the sociopolitical implications of these attitudes are quite different in Argentina than they are in the Sibelius Academy. Although the experimental, contemporary folk music scene may have emerged partially as a rejection of the conservative ideology of the earlier nationalist Finnish folk music revival, contemporary Finnish folk music claims an apolitical stance; Hill reports

"never hav[ing] heard a [contemporary] Finnish folk band with an overtly political message" (Hill 2005, 296). By contrast, many of the students and teachers at two Argentine schools I have studied professed explicitly political motivations for their musical activities, particularly in the EMPA. This attitude encompassed more than the politically directed public marches and protests organized by school members; for many of these musicians the very act of studying, performing and writing this music was itself intrinsically political. One of the founding teachers of the EMPA, bandoneonist and composer Rodolfo Mederos told me that he saw teaching tango music as a form of "*militancia,*" or political activism. And students frequently couched their artistic ambitions in terms of "revolution" or "changing the system."

But Hill astutely recognizes that claiming an apolitical stance is itself a political move, and the Sibelius Academy's musicians necessarily exist within larger systems of domination and subordination in which symbolic means of determining membership and exclusion are at play. And while the Academy's ideological grounding in the notion of "folk" authenticity as tied to ideals may be musically progressive, the social ramifications of that ideology are actually rather conservative. As Hill points out, while students often claim to feel part of a global community of folk musics, professing interests in oral musical cultures from Africa and Asia, this multiculturalism has done little to affect the prevalent xenophobia among students toward actual minority groups living in Finland, such as the Roma and Russian immigrants. And ironically, while the program was founded in part in an effort to raise the profile of folk music and musicians nationally, the emergence of a population of musicians with academic pedigrees in folk music has actually led to a devaluation of amateur pelimanni folk musicians and their music in the wider community where earlier they would have

enjoyed respect for their skills without regard to their extracurricular provenance. Hill also suggests that implicit in the Academy's emphasis on creative reinterpretation of ancient oral tradition materials is a certain criticism of those materials in their original form, a suggestion that oral tradition repertoire is at best a wellspring of materials that must be "improved" through contemporary compositional, improvisatory, or performative techniques in order to be made suitable for the concert stage.

These observations indicate a dangerous potential set of consequences when low-status musics are invested with the relative prestige of institutional support: when the musical practices are separated from their original social context (and often, from the people who originally made it) the line between advocacy for a music's presence in a larger social sphere and mere appropriation of it by dominant groups is not always entirely clear. When this institutionalization contains elements of an ideology of creative transformation of source materials rather than strict mimetic reproduction, as both of the Argentine schools' curricula do, it is worth recognizing that while this approach may engender greater discursive agency on the part of students, there is no guarantee that others' presence will not be excluded or even erased in the larger music culture in which that institution participates.

In order to address this issue, along with questions of musical process and aesthetics, I will draw attention to several other central issues: who is allowed to participate in this musical community? On what basis is their authority determined, and toward what end is it deployed? What is the nature of the public community that this musical culture creates, calls into being, or reinforces? I will address this latter question in the final chapter, examining *música popular* as a "field of cultural production" in Bourdieu's sense. The former two questions are discussed in Chapter 3, where I examine the power structures created by

institutional organization, and particularly the role of the state, in shaping the culture of the school.

Popular musics in the academy: the case of jazz

While the postcolonial case studies cited above primarily involve the institutionalization of teaching "traditional" or pre-industrial musical cultures, the cases of tango, jazz, and even *folklore* are somewhat different. While these musical genres have been historically excluded from the Argentine conservatory system, they also have far more in common with European art music than they do with, for example, the oral traditions of Morocco or Iran. All three of these popular genres already shared some of the social traits common to conservatory culture: they relied on Western notation and (mostly) Western harmonic language, they had a professional class of musicians and a concept of the ownership of music as intellectual property that recognized the achievements of individual composers and culture heroes, and by the time of the schools' founding all three genres had fallen from popular favor, and existed as musics marginal to the commercial music industry. In all of these regards, a far closer cultural and historical analogue to the development of schools of *música popular* in Argentina has been the extensive proliferation of conservatory and university jazz programs in the U.S. and the U.K.

Like schools of *música popular,* these programs did not gain widespread acceptance until well after the popularity of jazz itself had waned. The first college-level jazz program in the U.S. was founded at the Berklee College of Music in 1944, and the now venerable University of North Texas jazz program followed two years after with a degree in Dance Band, focusing on the big-band jazz repertoire (Ake 2002a, 262). But these programs were

unusual exceptions; by 1972 there were still only twelve university jazz programs nationwide (Murphy 1994, 34) and as late as the mid-1980s one jazz historian remembered that just "a generation ago high school or college courses in jazz would be as unthinkable as courses in safecracking" (Sales 1992, 209). By the mid-1990s this situation had changed dramatically; in the U.S. alone there were more than sixty undergraduate and thirty graduate programs in jazz performance (Ake 2002a, 263).

The gradual acceptance of jazz within the culturally conservative world of the Western music school was no mere coincidence of history, nor has it been without its detractors, including some jazz musicians themselves.[19] Tony Whyton argues that the instabilities in the institutional jazz education project and uneasiness with which jazz musicians and university music program administrators have traditionally regarded each other is not merely a question of convention but something "inherently linked to the nature of [jazz] music itself" (Whyton 2006, 66). By "music itself," Whyton means not only the repertoire and aesthetic practices, but also the web of social beliefs and practices that surround it, and the discursive strategies of representation that accompany them. For Whyton, there are two principal –and contradictory – popular narratives through which jazz is mythologized, both of which are contradictory to the idea of jazz as a discipline of academic study. Jazz tends to be simultaneously understood as a "deeply social music," an organic outgrowth of 'the people' in an 'authentic' sociocultural context, and at the same time discussed in terms of autonomous art, through a historical narrative that emphasizes "great men," composer-performers who are lionized as geniuses (Whyton 2006, 71).

[19] For contemporary jazz musicians' ambivalent perspectives about the consequences of university jazz programs, see (Haines 2003).

As Whyton argues, both of these mythologies are incompatible with a field of study in an institution of higher education. If, on one hand, jazz's "authenticity" is dependent upon its springing organically from a specific social and cultural context, then changing that context necessarily deprives that music of its validity. On the other hand, if jazz is, ultimately, the work of solitary geniuses whose contributions are lauded specifically because they deviate from, and in the process revolutionize, musical practice, then a systematic music education will be at best unnecessary, and at worst constraining and even toxic to the musical development of future "geniuses."

I believe that one of the reasons that university jazz programs have ultimately flourished has been their success in providing satisfying counter-narratives to both of the above mythologies. Even ethnomusicologists have been useful in this regard; Paul Berliner's ethnography of North American jazz musicians provides ample evidence of the ways that clubs, jam sessions, and private study have functioned as educational institutions that have long been essential for developing jazz musicians (Berliner 1994).

David Ake has provided insight about the ways in which both the musical aesthetics and historical narrative of jazz in conservatories have been selectively constructed. For example, classes in improvisation have emphasized the theory-intensive "chord-scale" method while neglecting to develop other improvisational approaches such as the use of "extended technique" in free jazz, and group improvisation(Ake 2002a, 267). Large ensemble playing also has tended to promote musical aesthetics compatible with the skills and approaches that conservatory musicians learn in classical ensembles such as blended tone, neglecting the possibility of timbral variation as an improvisational approach (Ake 2002a, 266-268). Similarly, jazz history textbooks and course materials tend to emphasize a

canon of figures whose musical aesthetics are most compatible with the social practices of conservatory study. John Coltrane – or at least the bebop-period version of John Coltrane – occupies a place of prominence in this canon, exemplifying a musical aesthetic that requires technical virtuosity and a deep knowledge of music theory, and whose own legendary diligence in practicing technique makes him an attractive role model for studio teachers to promote. Virtuosity is not the only relevant aspect affecting canonic status, however. Ake argues that, for example, Louis Jordan's band is often omitted from histories of the early bop era because his commercial success, later association with R&B bands and "the seeming lightheartedness of Jordan's music flags him as a problematic figure for critics attempting to paint jazz since the 1940s as a serious art form (Ake 2002b, 43).

Like Ake, Scott DeVeaux has recognized that one of the primary paradoxes in the discursive framing of jazz within these institutions is the genre's relationship to the culture industry. As the commercial sources of support for jazz musicians waned, , jazz was able to find support from within institutions of "high culture" precisely by parlaying their lack of commercial success into (again, in Bourdieu's terms) cultural capital. And furthermore – although jazz musicians rarely acknowledge this from within their newly won places in "high culture" institutions – this cultural capital can have economic benefits as well, which in turn *could* threaten that cultural capital if not deftly framed. As DeVeaux observes,

> jazz is kept separate from the marketplace only by demonizing the economic system that allows musicians to survive - and from this demon there is no escape. Wynton Marsalis may pride himself on his refusal to 'sell out', but that aura of artistic purity is an indisputable component of his commercial appeal (DeVeaux 1991, 530)
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The main relevance of these observations to the present study is to emphasize the shifting ways that one popular music genre has been discursively framed as "popular," "high

art," and anti-commercial, and to underline the ways that this shifting discursive framing has affected the music's position relative to institutional music education. As I will argue in Chapter 4, the teachers of the three genres of *música popular* taught in these schools have also constructed historical narratives and musical aesthetics that reflect their ideological concerns. But in order to better explain the significance of those constructions, I wish first to contextualize the moment in which these three genres of *música popular* were able to converge in a single academic institution by tracing their intersecting historical trajectories, and the way that they coalesced within the discursive category of *música popular*.

Chapter 2: Sociohistorical context

There is no extant record of how the musicians and politicians originally responsible for the creation of the Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda determined that jazz, *folklore*, and tango would constitute the three main curricular areas for the school. Whether implicitly or explicitly, such a decision was dependent upon a communally accepted social space of conviviality for these three genres of music, and their shared suitability for a unified cultural and pedagogical project. Furthermore, this curricular decision points to numerous other assumptions, each of which is itself the product of specific sociohistorical processes.

The specific processes by which the EMPA (and later, the Falla program) implemented their pedagogical and institutional plans will be discussed in the following chapter. First, however, in order to understand the ramifications of this particular grouping of three musical genres, I wish to briefly trace their disparate but intersecting social histories. Given the limitations of space and context here, I am interested not in a comprehensive history of each genre from its inception, but rather in those aspects of social and musical change that most affected these musics and their meanings in the contemporary context within Buenos Aires. All three of these genres have complex histories and aesthetics that were shaped by both vernacular music cultures and their incursions into the commercial culture industry. With recording and mass production, these genres were disseminated – and ultimately even produced – in places far removed from their origins, and all of them were inarguably shaped by these displacements and flows of sounds and meanings. In Argentina, *folklore* and particularly tango have been shaped by cosmopolitan and translocal movements of people, products, and sounds, yet audiences and performers insist upon the fundamentally

local nature of these musics and their meanings. I do not understand this to be a contradiction, but rather see the ways that a "local" musical and cultural identity obtains through appeals to nostalgia, specific constellations of linguistic and musical symbols and other semiotic ways of inscribing place to be a logical consequence of modernity, displacement, and schizophonia.

In order to understand how tango, *folklore* and jazz operate today in Buenos Aires as *música popular*, it is necessary first to examine how they became "popular music" in the Anglo-American sense. Indeed, these genres constituted the first truly massively popular music in Argentina, and were tremendously influential in shaping the ways that Argentines came to understand their national and regional identities and their relationship to modernity. In this chapter, I will trace the ways that tango, jazz, and *folklore* (in that order) became significant popular and mass-mediated genres, shaped by and in turn shaping local imaginaries.

While acknowledging that this organization is necessarily reductive, I will follow the following rough heuristic division of the time period in question, tracing the relationship between social and political change and the concomitant changes in local popular music culture:

1916-1920s: Emergence of the Argentine middle class as a politically dominant force. Early development of radio. Widespread acceptance of tango as popular/mass culture.

1930s: Coup and economic crisis. Sound cinema (re)internationalizes tango icons, yet widespread social suffering marks the emergence of socially conscious tango lyricists. Radio becomes widely available among lower classes. "Hot" jazz becomes popular on radio and alongside tango in cabarets and music halls.

1940s: End of the "Golden Age" of tango, when orchestras were largest and most plentiful and material support for tango was greatest. Massive internal migration to the cities creates a new class of rural-to-urban proletariat, constituting the power base for President Juan D. Perón (elected in 1945) and Peronism, and also for the new mass-mediated "*folklore*." The Peronist party is actively interventionist in the cultural arena, politicizing access to media and employment.

1950s: An increasingly restrictive series of governments, both elected and de facto, continue to promote a "traditionalist" *folklore* as part of a cultural nationalist project. Decline in popularity of tango, disappearance of nearly all large ensembles.

1960-1970s: (Re)emergence of jazz as compatible with, and sharing social spaces with, newer experimental and anti-commercial *folklore* and tango. Some convergence with new forms of "national progressive music," later called *rock nacional*.

1976-1983: Military dictatorship. Repression of public dissent through censorship, violence, and state-sponsored terror. Many musicians are forced into exile or extreme conscription of their professional activities. Some "traditional" *folklore*, either tacitly or through the participation of the musicians themselves, becomes associated with the xenophobic nationalism of the dictatorship. Rock musicians and others associated with "countercultures" are actively persecuted.

1984-present: Democracy, resurgence of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), a national political party historically opposed to Peronism. Rock music loses its association with counterculture and gradually becomes hegemonic. Tango and *folklore* are fragmented genres; each contains musically conservative (and also more lucrative and popular) factions as well as

experimental, anti-commercial factions. The latter comes to comprise the faculty and curriculum of the emerging *música popular* academies.

While these divisions grossly simplify nearly a century of complex history, they serves to underline the central arguments I wish to pose about the intersecting historical trajectories of these musics: Like jazz in the United States, jazz , tango and *folklore* enjoyed moments of widespread popularity and consumption as mass culture in Argentina. And also like North American jazz, I believe these genres' fall from popularity, and ultimate self-positioning *against* notions of (mass) popularity were fundamental to their eventual acceptance into formal music schools.[20] In part, these genres are now able to stake credible claims to anti-hegemonic and populist identities based on the social memory of recent state-sponsored terror and political malfeasance, and in part on a reconstructed historical imaginary that celebrates the humble and populist origins of all three genres, sometimes bracketing the active roles that the capitalist culture industry and national governments of various stripes played in shaping them.

Pre-1920s: Emergence of the metropolis

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Buenos Aires itself was changing as rapidly as was the nascent technology for sound reproduction. The port city, known as the "Gran Aldea" – the Great Village – in the nineteenth century expanded astronomically around the turn of the century, due in large part to racially motivated "modernizing" policies encouraging (and even bankrolling) immigration from Western Europe. Massive influxes of

[20] On jazz as "America's classical music" see (Ake 2002a; DeVeaux 1991).

European immigrants contributed to a tenfold increase in the capital's population between 1880 and 1910 (Castro 1990, 32). The majority of these immigrants came to form part of the new urban proletariat who scraped out a precarious existence in the densely packed, polyglot *suburbios* surrounding the urban center. Employment was scarce and working and conditions were poor, and as a result significant civil unrest emerged for the first time in the city. Strikes in the years of 1907, 1909, and 1910 all involved more than 100,000 participants (Castro 1990, 109). The growing blue-collar population also found themselves cramped into tighter and more uncomfortable living conditions – frequently in large tenement houses called *conventillos* – as rent prices far outpaced salary growth. In 1886, for example, the average worker paid 16% of his income in rent, while by 1912 that figure had risen to 30% (Bergero 2008, 93).

The overlapping and intermingling of linguistic and cultural practices from a wide variety of European, *criollo* and Afro-Argentine sources all contributed to the development of a new highly inflected local dialect of Spanish, called *caló porteño* or *lunfardo*.[21] These transnational migrations and confluences were also prime influences in the first original musical and dance genre to emerge from this new, chaotic and cosmopolitan urban space: the tango.

1916-1920s: "Massification" of tango and the rise of the middle class

[21] *Lunfardo* first referred specifically to the criminally related jargon used by thieves and other petty criminals, although eventually the term's meaning expanded to its contemporary usage to signify all local slang (Castro 1990, 41-45).

While historians of the tango often begin their chronicles in the mid-nineteenth century,[22] I follow Donald Castro in believing that prior to the 1920s it is more appropriate to understand tango as "*cultura popular*" – roughly akin to "folk culture" -- than as a popular music genre fully integrated into the culture industry (Castro 1990; 1999). Tango flourished as a largely aural/oral tradition in the working-class suburbios; most tango musicians were not formally trained, learned melodies by ear, and improvised unsophisticated and often ribald lyrics. Because of the tango's close association with houses of prostitution and the lower classes, the aristocracy and growing middle classes did not openly accept it (although there is ample evidence of upper class men semi-covertly frequenting these locales) until the mid-1920s. Two significant social events brought about this change: First, a tango craze in postwar Paris lent the dance newfound credibility among the Francophile Argentine upper classes. Second, the burgeoning radio and recording industry significantly expanded tango's potential audience and the spaces where it was heard. I will address each of these issues in turn.

Transatlantic tango

One of the central paradoxes in the tangled history of the tango is that it likely never would have become the "national dance" of Argentina had it not first entered into vogue in Paris. Historians have been unable to pinpoint a precise point or source of entry into France for the tango, although there are a number of likely groups who would have had contact with the world of tango in Buenos Aires: Wealthy Argentine aristocrats, as well as some small groups of touring musicians and dancers, clearly introduced it into the cabarets and

[22] See, e.g. (Ferrer 1977).

dance halls of Paris by 1905.[23] The city of Marseilles also constituted a likely port of entry for published piano scores as well as a site for contact between the sailors and the women and men who were involved in the sexual slave trade between Argentina and France (Savigliano 1995, 109; Guy 1991).

In any case, by the post-war period the tango had sprung into vogue in Paris both as a staged spectacle and as a participatory dance for Parisian elites. Unlike their Argentine counterparts, the Parisian aristocracy apparently harbored no anxiety about the dance's potentially scandalous background. As Marta Savigliano explains,

> the elites of the imperial colonial powers belonged to a class that no other class or classification in the world could threaten. Their position seemed so secure that they did not need to worry about the low-class associations of the exotic practices they enjoyed or even about the precise national origins of such practices (Savigliano 1995, 115).

Indeed, tango was often grouped together with other so-called *danses brunnes* (literally, "brown [people's] dances") such as the Brazilian *maxixe* and the Afro-American cakewalk as vaguely related exotica that shared putative African influences.

This is not to say that the tango as it was practiced in Paris was identical to its Argentine predecessor; ballroom dance instructors removed many of the more potentially scandalous moves such as the *cortes* and *quebradas*, which "broke" the body at the hip and knees and were likely related to older Afro-Argentine choreographic traditions. (Thompson 2005, 223-225). Instead, they encouraged a more upright dancing posture and open embrace in keeping with European salon dances in vogue at the time. Some in the Argentine press

[23] While the Argentine aristocracy were (publicly, at least) scandalized by the libidinous movements and lower-class associations with tango back home, the social milieu in *fin de siècle* Paris proved a far more libertine environment. Openly sexual "exotic" dances like the Apache and the can-can were already the rage in the Parisian bohemian demimonde by the turn of the century, and tango – as reproduced through processes of "auto-exoticism" became a compatible and frequently conflated addition to the choreographic menu.

mocked the European adaptations of the tango for their lack of verisimilitude to the tango back home, yet a number of Argentine dancers and teachers anxious to capture the affections and patronage of the newly interested local bourgeoisie adapted their own styles in ways that reflected the European disciplining influence (Baim 2007, 97-99).

Back in Argentina, national politics for the first time came to be dominated not by the old families of landed oligarchs, but by a political party that appealed to the interests of the working and middle classes: the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) captured the support of the larger part of the immigrant population, who were given voting rights upon arrival in Argentina. The UCR's candidate, Hipólito Yrigoyen was elected president in 1916. Internal factions divided the party between supporters of Yrigoyen and the more conservative Alvear, but one or the other of these groups remained in power through the end of the 1920s. During this time, the middle class experienced significant improvements in quality of life, while the working classes who had also supported the UCR generally did not see any such gains.

The tango also became closely associated with the UCR during this period, primarily through cabaret culture. The cabarets constituted a significant venue for tango orchestras, and also one of the most essential spaces where aspiring UCR politicians worked to develop popular support. Blas Matamoro has even argued that there was essentially a homology between musical style and political ideology, since the intra- party division between the more liberal Yrigoyenistsas and the conservative Alvearistas corresponded roughly to a split between the "evolutionary" bands led by musicians like Julio de Caro and the "traditionalist" ensembles such as Francisco Canaro's (Matamoro 1969, 95).

Mass media: popular genres and the radio

While tango music and dance clearly came to play important roles in the public sphere during this period, perhaps the more pervasive change in the identity and social meanings of the tango during this period was the way in which new forms of mass mediation allowed it for the first time to constitute a part of the middle-class domestic sphere (Castro 1990, 140-141). Radio would eventually become one of the primary vehicles through which the tango would become a massively popular genre. The converse is also true: it was through tango that radio grew to mass popularity in Argentina, particularly during the 1930s.

During the first years of the new technology's presence in Argentina, however, radio had a decidedly less populist orientation. The first radio transmission in the country was made on the 27th of August of 1920, by the newly formed Sociedad de Radio Argentina. A society mainly made up of wealthy tinkerers and technology enthusiasts, their audience was educated, cultured, and small, and the repertoire suited them: a live performance of Wagner's *Parsifal,* broadcast from the Teatro Coliseo (Merkin and Ulanovsky 1995, 19; Diaz 2007, 129). The radio would eventually become a far more economically affordable means through which the lower classes could access recorded music in their homes than the record player, which remained a luxury. But unlike the wind-up record players of the time, the radio faced an additional hurdle to widespread acceptance: it was not until the 1930s that most of the city was hooked into the electric grid (Castro 1999).

Spurred at first by its acceptance abroad, and the development of *tango canción* – sung tangos, with often melancholy lyrics – grew to become the dominant music consumed by the Argentine middle and upper classes during the 1920s. In 1925, for example, tangos comprised 90% of the half million records sold locally, even though only an estimated 4.5%

of the population owned record players (Castro 1999). Nonetheless, there was a considerable degree of permeability between genres of popular music; swing, ragtime and other early jazz records had become popular enough that local versions of these North American styles also began to gain in popularity. The Nacional record label, for example, recorded nearly as many foxtrots as tangos in 1925,[24] both by artists such as the Eleuterio Iribarren American Jazz Band and by some of the leading tango orchestras, such as those led by Francisco Canaro and Lucio Demare (Pujol 2004, 77).

The strict division between the tango and the rural and other regional styles of Argentina was also a later development. In Corrientes province, for example, historian Rubén Pérez Bugallo reports that "típicas" (that is, tango orchestras) were more popular than the native *chamamé* ensembles during this period, even though the latter style would later come to be the pre-eminent genre in the region. Even iconic tango singer Carlos Gardel began his professional career singing both tango and Argentine folk music in a duo with José Razzano (Gravano 1985, 80). Nonetheless, the concentration of economic and political power (not to mention population density) in the capital city contributed to tango's unconstested hegemonic status during the period.

1930s-1940s: End of the "Golden Age" for tango

It is not surprising, given the tango's thematic obsession with bitterness and despair, that the apex of its popularity occurred during a time of widespread suffering across nearly all social strata. In 1930, Hipólito Yrigoyen's second term was cut short by a de facto coup,

[24] One presumes that this label was not particularly representative in this regard, given the disproportionate levels of sales of the genres in the same year cited above.

and he was replaced by General José Félix Uriburu, leading the way for a series of conservative and military leaders that would last until the mid-1940s.

The economic crisis that characterized the 1930s in Argentina was far from an isolated phenomenon, of course; serious economic depressions in Europe and the United States were related, and largely responsible for the international market disappearing for Argentina's main exports of grain and beef. While many of the serious economic gains that the middle class achieved during the 1920s had not been shared by the working classes, the disparity between these two groups' circumstances was somewhat attenuated by the depression. Cabarets – the primary public sphere for the urban bourgeoisie – saw their attendances plummet. Furthermore, the once exclusive technology of the radio became far more accessible across a wider spectrum of social classes. One local radio company, Ubertini and Co., produced a total of approximately 1500 radios in 1928. Just three years later, however, they were producing as many as 2000 of their most popular model per month (Castro 1999). As potential audiences shrank and live performance venues disappeared, tango and other musicians began to depend increasingly on radio performances for income. By the late 1930s, this also included a group that, for a brief period, would overlap significantly with tango musicians, both in terms of their public and the actual membership of their groups: jazz musicians.

Like the tango, jazz first began to attract audience interest in Buenos Aires through radio. Starting in 1934, the program "Síncopa y ritmo" (Syncopation and rhythm) on Radio Splendid broadcast the latest in "hot" jazz records imported from the United States, and by 1937 the audience had grown enough that a local "hot" jazz band, the Dixie Pals, became quite popular (Pujol 2004, 65-75). Jazz bands began to share some of the same public spaces

where middle-class audiences would go to listen and dance to tango. Important downtown cabarets like the Armenonville contracted a tango band and a jazz band for the same evening and had them alternate sets; some bandleaders even developed working partnerships with a colleague in the other genre and only booked contracts as a pair. Musicians even passed back and forth between the ensembles, or held concurrent jobs in bands of both genres (Pujol 2004, 24, 80). As work dried up for both jazz and tango musicians through the late 1940s, the collegiality of musicians from both genres became strained. The late 1940s brought a constellation of new international musics whose popularity eclipsed that of both genres among the urban middle classes, particularly the bolero and other romantic song genres sung in Spanish. Meanwhile, demographic changes in the working-class population, coupled with the advent of a new form of political populism, would shape the emergence of a new commercial genre: "*folklore*."

1940s-1950s: Perón, cultural nationalism, and *folklore*

Argentina rapidly expanded its national industries during the early 1940s, spurring the growth and expansion of its main cities. The possibility of employment in this new industrial sector spurred a massive internal migration that changed the culture and geography of these cities so fundamentally that scholars have suggested it amounted to a "third founding" of the capital city (Gravano 1985, 87). Buenos Aires' rural-to-urban migrants made up only 12 percent of the population in 1936, for example, while by 1947 that figure had risen to twenty nine percent (Little 1975, 164-165).

The porteño ruling elites did not welcome this internal migrant population; they rejected them in terms that frequently drew deeply on racist ideology. The new urban

migrants, particularly those from the Andean northwest region of the country, generally displayed a higher degree of indigenous background both phenotypically and culturally than the Europe-obsessed denizens of the port city, and soon a variety of derogatory terms emerged, the most common of which was "*cabecitas negras"* ("little black heads"). One prominent UCR politician even memorably referred to the wave of immigration as the *"aluvión zoológico"* ("zoological flood") (Vila 1991).

Not all politicians saw this population as a threat, however. Juan Domingo Perón, a general serving as secretary of war and vice president under the de facto military government, was able to secure broad popular support from labor unions and other immigrant-heavy groups, and was elected to the presidency in 1946.[25] The Peronist government took a far more interventionist role in shaping the national cultural imaginary and politicizing the cultural bureaucracy than had any of its predecessors. Several aspects of this process are relevant to the development of *música popular* and deserve detailed examination here: the ways that Peronist policies, including labor laws and controlling access to radio and other media, effectively ended the careers of non-Peronist tango musicians and contributed to the decline in tango's popularity; the ways that their idealized notions of national identity made them active participants in the "science" of folklore studies; and the concomitant ways that rural folk musics were unified under the rubric of *"folklore*" as a popular mass-mediated musical genre produced in the urban centers.

[25] Peron's rise to power, which included a period of imprisonment followed by massive popular mobilizations calling for his release, is a complex topic and Perón himself remains even today perhaps the most polarizing figure in Argentine history. For a more complete contextual analysis of Perón and the early years of Peronism see (Plotkin 2002).

One of Perón's key moves in dominating national discourse and controlling dissent was to begin acquiring radio stations in 1947. Before long, the national government's radio network had subsumed all private broadcasters, "bend[ing] the radio to Peron's own will" (Azzi 2002, 33). Perón understood the potential political capital to be harnessed in generating associations with the tango, which was still widely popular during the mid-1940s. He rewarded prominent bandleaders, composers and lyricists who were willing to become party members with greater access to radio and live performances and government positions. In fact, tango poet and outspoken Peronist Cátulo Castillo was even named director of the Manuel de Falla Municipal Conservatory (although as we know there would be no tango curriculum until 2004) in 1952, a post that he lost when Perón was deposed three years later (Castro 1990, 242-245).

This new mandatory association with Peronism generated something of a dilemma for tango musicians (and particularly lyricists) earlier known for the fatalistic defeatism and socially conscious forms of protest in the tango repertoire of the 1930s. They could not reconcile the positivist, strong nationalism of Peronist discourse with an ethos and aesthetics based on the practice of *mufarse* – complaining, in a philosophically detached manner, about the irredeemable corruption of the world and everyone in it. There were never any successful tango lyrics that embraced Peronism. Even Enrique Santos Discépolo and Cátulo Castillo, perhaps the two most celebrated tango poets whose deeply cynical and philosophical tangos in the 1930s remain among the finest examples of the *mufarse* tradition, were never able to reconcile these two worldviews. Both became ardent Peronists and effectively stopped writing tangos during the 1950s (Vila 1991). Poets who did continue to compose new tango lyrics in the 1940s largely emphasized themes of nostalgia for a lost and

romanticized past rather than sociopolitical complaint; perhaps the most emblematic of these was Homero Manzi.[26]

As a result, the tango in the 1940s saw a return to an emphasis on the dance form and instrumental writing more than sung tango, and a growing distance between tango aesthetics and the concerns of the working class. One of the consequences of this move was a musical aesthetic that began to approach that of classical music, favoring complexity and innovation and relying on increasingly complex arrangements. Arranger and bandoneonist Ismael Spitalnik remembered this period in an interview with María Susana Azzi:

> We had to study harmony and counterpoint and apply the new knowledge to enrich the interpretation of the tango...The demand for greater responsibility and the discipline imposed by the music stand -- the need to be able to read music -- raised the average professional capacity of the musicians. It was very different work from thirty years earlier, when there would be a trio or a quartet *a la parrilla*[27] with only one score on the piano. The arranger and the music stand disciplined the musicians. From a musical point of view, we stood in opposition to the so-called classical musicians who looked down on us and despised us like rats. But later on the violinists who had mastered the tango played in symphony orchestras -- the professional quality had improved that much (Azzi 2002, 34).

The social worlds of tango and classical musicans began to overlap in ways that have continued to this day. By the 1990s many classical musicians who played stringed instruments also made a substantial portion of their income playing tourist-oriented, "traditional" tango shows (Buono 2003 p.c.). The last cellist to play with Osvaldo Pugliese's orchestra told me that during the late 1970s he could earn as much in a single concert with the group as he had in an entire month playing in a classical orchestra (Villarejo 2007 p.c.).

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[26] For a careful musical and textual analysis of perhaps his best-known and most reperesentative tango, "Sur" co-written with Aníbal Troilo, see (Pelinski 2000)

[27] Literally "on the grill," *parrilla* is a quasi-improvisational form of ensemble playing where musicians spontaneously draw from a stock of idiomatic rhythmic accompaniment figures, and interpreting the melody with a free sense of rubato and ornamentation, trading melodic and accompanimental roles every few phrases.

But while Peronism provided a stable if politically circumscribed official space for the tango, it also effectively neutralized its effectiveness and credibility as an aesthetic vehicle for social and political complaint. Bandleader Nicolás Lefcovich put it plainly: "If I were to blame someone for the tango's decay, I would blame Juan Domingo Perón" (Azzi 1991, 212-213).

While there was some tension between the discourse and ideals of Peronism and those of tango lyricists, there was no such difficulty associated with many of the rural musical traditions of the country. "Folklore" as both an academic discipline and as a set of cultural products, idealized representations of rural life meant for consumption in the urban centers, had existed for decades before Perón came to power. But Perón was the first national leader who took an active interest in promoting "popular" culture as a way of consolidating political support, and in this regard he vigorously supported "folklore" in both of these senses.

The academic study of folklore in Argentina, following the tradition of Herder, dates back to Paul Groussac (Groussac 1893) who, following attendance at a Chicago conference in 1905 advocated successfully for the creation of a national folklore commission. Records from the early years of this commission do not suggest a particularly well-funded, serious or successful enterprise. Even Juan Alfonso Carrizo, writing in 1953 while still employed as director of this commission, reported about the less than satisfactory results of a 1921 attempt to undertake a comprehensive survey of the nation's folk culture by enlisting schoolteachers, one of few educated groups with regular contact with rural populations. Carrizo reports that students delighted in passing off their own, often crude rhymes and tales as "traditional," and that many teachers could not be bothered to collect material at all, and merely submitted copies of songs and rhymes they had copied out of earlier published

anthologies (Carrizo 1977, 19-20). By the late 1920s, the commission began to underwrite research trips of their own to compile and publish a *Cancionero Popular* ("People's Songbook") dedicated to each of the country's provinces, starting in the northwest. By 1943 they had published five of these, for the provinces of Tucumán, Salta, Jujuy, la Rioja, and Catamarca.

Not all of the "compilation"[28] of folk materials was undertaken for scholarly purposes. Andrés Chazarreta, a schoolteacher in the province of Santiago del Estero, began by transcribing and publishing folk music of his native province, but would grow to fame as the impresario and organizer of a theatre troupe of dancers and musicians who brought the first staged representation of rural music culture to the capital. The show, which featured a styled representation of a "typical" ranch setting and dancers and musicians in colorful costumes, debuted in 1921 at the Teatro Políteama to wild critical success. Following this, Chazarreta's company toured the country, and during the late 1930s became a regular presence on the radio (Portorrico 1997, 83). Effectively, this curated, staged version of an idealized, "national" rural identity – in fact, based almost entirely on the local traditions of Santiago del Estero – came to have profound effects on the musical imaginaries and musical practices, professional and otherwise, of urban and rural residents alike.

> Suddenly, the entire country is dancing like the old Argentine traditions that Chazarreta heard in Santiago del Estero and the

[28] Chazarreta registered himself as the copyright holder of many of the pieces that he transcribed and his group performed, some of which (e.g. "López Pereyra") became well-known and widely recorded. He is something of an ambivalent figure among contemporary folklore musicians. While he is largely credited with sparking the first great interest in rural musical traditions among audiences in the capital, he also clearly used his relative position of power and cosmopolitan cultural capital unfairly to his own benefit. When a student asked Juan Falú about Chazarreta in a *folklore* class at the Falla, the teacher responded by telling a joke he claimed to be popular among musicians in Tucumán: "Early one morning, a farmer caught Chazarreta sneaking out of his chicken coop, several hens under each arm. 'Don Chazarreta,' the farmer asked him, astonished, 'Are you stealing chickens?' 'I'm not stealing them,' Chazarreta replied, 'I'm *compiling* them.'"

> choreographies that he learned in the same city between 1905 and 1911… From the musical point of view, precisely, Santiago and Tucumán [provinces] form, within the country, an island characterized by the influence of the harp, whose rhythm Chazarreta transferred to the piano, and to the Republic…The country dances and plays the versions of Santiago del Estero (Vega 1981, 127).

After 1945, interest in staged "folklore" as a form of entertainment and academic interest in folklore both received enthusiastic support from the Peronists, who saw in the idealized representations of rural life a positive image through which to construct a populist national identity. The images that came to represent this ideal were synthesized from a variety of sources, chief among them being the romanticized *gaucho*, or cattleman, drawn in turnfrom the popular *gauchesco* literature of the period (Diaz 2005).[29]

Mass-mediated *folklore* music during the period had its first great exponent in singer Antonio Tormo, whose version of "El rancho 'e la Cambicha" became the first record in Argentina to sell one million copies (Vila 1991). Like the Chazarreta staged folklore of several decades before, this new mass-mediated genre, which Claudio Díaz has termed the "classic" paradigm of folklore (Diaz 2005) during this time privileged the traditions of the northwestern region of the country over other repertoires and styles. And when *folklore* musicians played other regional repertoires they often showed evidence of cross-cregional influence. The aforementioned "El rancho 'e la Cambincha," for example, is a *rasgueo doble*, a slow genre from the northeastern littoral region, but the version that Tormo made famous features parallel guitar *punteo* (plucking, rather than strumming) in a style more typical of the Cuyo region (Diaz 2007, 157).

[29] For a thorough treatment of the ways this same literature served as a wellspring of images and inspiration for art music composers during the same period, see (Schwartz-Kates 1997).

1960s-70s: new folklore, new tango, and a new social space

Despite such stylistic innovations and adaptations the discourse surrounding the "classic" paradigm for folklore remained quite conservative, nostalgically promoting the idea of folklore as the natural expression of an unchanging rural national identity. The 1960s witnessed a so-called "folklore boom," in which professional folklore groups proliferated, as did the public spaces for performing and hearing their music, most notably the National Folklore Festival in Cosquín. More accurately, however, this period might better be characterized not only by the expansion of the field of folklore but by its bifurcation.

On one hand, traditionalist groups continued to produce music that was reminiscent of the idealized nationalist nostalgia that had facilitated the widespread popularity of recorded *folklore* in the 1940s and 1950s. But starting in Mendoza in the early 1960s an oppositional movement coalesced around a different concept of *folklore* that embraced musical and poetic innovation. This movement, whose principal figures were poet Armando Tejada Gómez, guitarist Oscar Matus, and singer Mercedes Sosa, called itself the Nuevo Cancionero. Collectively they published a manifesto in 1963 rejecting the "postcard folklorism… that has no life or relevancy for the man who builds the country, modifying its reality from day to day." Instead, they declared a "search for a national music from popular roots that expresses the country in its human and regional totality" (quoted in García 2006). Actively rejecting both hegemonic, commercially successful forms of nationalist *folklore* and the increasingly repressive series of governments that supported them, members of the Nuevo Cancionero embraced leftist causes and their most public voice, Mercedes Sosa, fled into exile during the dictatorship of the 1970s.

Along with their commitment to musical innovation, and populist politics, one of the notable features of the Nuevo Cancionero manifesto was its advocacy of a "national music" that expresses a "regional totality." That is, they rejected the division between urban and rural popular forms that had shaped the popular music industry in Argentina for decades. Indeed, Mercedes Sosa frequently performed throughout her career not only with other *folklore* artists, but with tango musicians such as bandoneonist Rodolfo Mederos and Argentine rock icon Charly García. The Nuevo Cancionero manifesto marked a new kind of ideology of popular music, in which notions of authenticity, tradition, and regional identity were less important than ideological position. The overriding commonality between the musicians that began to share in this new social space was political rather than musical.

Meanwhile, in the capital new convergences between popular genres in social spaces also shared a sense of counterhegemonic activism. In this case, the discourse surrounding new musical and social intersections was justified less in terms of populist politics, and more in terms of an anti-commercial aesthetic sense that mirrored high art assumptions. While Nuevo Cancionero and other experimental folklore artists would gradually begin to overlap with these circles, it was first the worlds of tango and jazz that found themselves, several decades after their commercial zenith, once again compatible. Since the decline in tango's popularity, musicians who remained professionally active in the genre had employed a strategy similar to that of jazz musicians in the U.S. at the end of the big band era: they reduced ensemble size, frequently playing in quartets and quintets. And the audiences for tango, similar to those for jazz, had shifted away from dancing toward attentive listening.

The combination of these factors led to the creation of clubs that catered to both tango and jazz musicians and fans. When the first of these, a club called Jamaica, proved

unable to meet the capacity of the spectators, a group of investors and musicians including bandoneonist-composer Astor Piazzolla opened a newer, larger club in 1963 called 676. It quickly became a mecca for both local and travelling musicians. Piazzolla's own quintet played there frequently, alternating sets with visiting jazz artists including Stan Getz and Gary Burton (who would later collaborate with Piazzolla on a duet album) (Pujol 2004, 215). Piazzolla himself embodied this new genre crossing-sensibility. Trained in European art-music composition by such luminaries as Nadia Boulanger and Alberto Ginastera, and with an equally impressive résumé of work in the tango world (he rose to prominence playing in the most highly regarded tango orchestra of the early 1940s, that of bandoneonist Aníbal Troilo), Piazzolla fashioned himself a revolutionary and progenitor of a new genre: *Tango Nuevo* ("New Tango") (Azzi and Collier 2000). The force of Piazzolla's personality and vision seem to have established a new social environment in club that left quite an impression with critics and audience members. One journalist called 676 a "sanctuary," while another remarked on its "almost religious silence," cautioning would-be attendees that this was "not music to chat through" (Pujol 2004, 215; Azzi and Collier 2000, 83).

Before long, a few small record labels began to devote themselves to this new curious amalgamation of aesthetic and social values drawn from art music, jazz, tango, and folklore. The musicians were frequently formally trained, valued originality over commercial viability (and were in fact generally suspicious of the latter) and celebrated popular genres that had long been repudiated by classical musicians, institutions, and audiences. But at the same time, they demanded quiet and attracted audiences who privileged attentive listening,

behaviors and spaces that until that point had been absent from popular music performance in Argentina.[30]

1976-83 Dictatorship, repression and exile

Collectively known as "El Proceso," the years from 1976 to 1983 were among the darkest in Argentina's history. The country was run by a military dictatorship that used police-state tactics of violence, abduction and intimidation to quell any form of opposition, purported or real; its dominance marked a nadir in the history of the country's popular culture (to say nothing of human rights).[31] During this time popular musicians faced intense scrutiny even if they did not explicitly engage in political activities. Members of the growing rock counterculture were regularly harassed by police and even jailed for such offenses as wearing blue jeans or long hair for men (Grinberg 2008). Censors controlled both radio and television broadcasts and blacklisted musicians from live performance venues, forcing many musicians into exile or out of work (Diaz 2007, 278).

Local rock music, termed "*rock nacional,"* was the most visible countercultural popular musical form through which some coherent sense of resistance coalesced during the period, although *rock nacional* as a genre was less determined by musical style and more by this sociocultural association (Vila 1989). Rock bands and musicians whose backgrounds were in *folklore* or tango were frequent collaborators; the bandoneón even came briefly into

[30] Diego Fischermann (Fischermann 2004) argues that this process began even earlier and is largely a consequence of sound recording and reproduction technology that allowed for popular music's incursion into the domestic sphere. While I respect his argument, particularly about the ways that recordings made it possible to treat popular music as products (or even sonic *objets d'art*), I believe these new public spaces played an important role in shaping social behavior.

[31] Both the junta government and their tactics of state-sponsored terror, popularly known as the "Guerra Sucia" ("Dirty War") have been the topic of countless books, theses, and journalistic inquiries. See e.g. (Rosa, Chávez, and Manson 1993; Hodges 1991).

vogue within rock bands during the late 1970s (Grinberg 2008). Meanwhile, as in the 1960s, some traditionalist *folklore* groups came to be associated with the junta government, either through explicit support or tacit self-censorship.

1984-86 Return to democracy, resurgence of *música popular*

By the early 1980s, the military junta's ability to inflict order began to decline. The misguided war with the British over the disputed territory of the Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands contributed to their fall from power. The government tried to spur anti-English sentiment, instituting a policy during the war banning English language music from radio broadcast and mandating a greater space for local acts. Thus, the war ultimately had an unexpected effect on local popular music: it lent rock music in Spanish, for the first time, an air of state-sponsored legitimacy, effectively neutralizing much of its countercultural associations. Journalist Mariano Mazo observed that "from the Malvinas [war] onward, rock became the official soundtrack of the system"[32] (Pedroso 2007, 42). Meanwhile, with democracy reinstated many of the artists who had faced persecution and exile returned to an upswell of public interest and goodwill.

With the return to democracy, popular backlash against Peronism (Perón's third wife, Isabelita, had been president in 1976 and had gradually ushered in a series of changes that had facilitated the military takeover) brought their historical opponents, the center-right Unión Cívica Radical, back to the forefront of national politics for the first time in decades. Even the national universities, long a bastion of leftist politics, developed a substantial

[32] For a contemporary journalistic analysis of the continuing mutually beneficial relationship between prominent rock musicians and politicians, see (Provéndola 2008).

student Radical movement (Vila 1989, 19-21). As I will discuss in the next chapter, the province of Buenos Aires joined this wave of support for the Radicales, electing as governor Alejandro Armendáriz, whose administration would soon be responsible for founding the Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda.

Chapter 3: Structures of Power, Authority and Hegemony

In Chapter 1, I argued for the necessity of ethnographic method in order to understand the contingent, flexible and unofficial ways that cultural practice happens within institutional educational spaces. While I do not wish to understate the extent to which individual actors create gaps between theory (or law) and practice, or open up spaces for partial contestation or circumvention of official power structures, I do believe that these structures affect daily practices and their meanings within these schools of popular music in pervasive ways, and deserve careful attention in their own right. Both the Falla conservatory and the EMPA are schools that fall within the purview of the state's mandated public educational system. As such, they are beholden to various levels of bureaucratic control and ideological or political influence that shape the daily life of students, teachers, and administrators in any number of ways, including curricular content, economic stability, availability of resources and limits on how they can be used, and forms of negotiating conflict with authority.

In this chapter I wish to explore how the structures and practices of institutionalization ultimately affect the aesthetics and ideological content of *música popular*. I will move from a macro-analysis of structures of power– the role of the state at national, provincial, and municipal levels in shaping educational policy and practice – to a more locally specific examination of the roles that structures of authority play within each of these two sites. At each level, I wish to complicate an understanding of the state authority's functioning as a simple top-down and ideologically coherent hegemonic process. I agree with Ana María Ochoa that

> institutions are not monolithic structures but are rather permeated by the uneven flows that result from the effects of the interaction between the different types of groupings, associations, persons that characterize civil society, the social, and cultural transformations brought about through their influence . . . with historically inherited modes of authoritarian politics (Ochoa Gautier 2001, 386-87).

With an ethnographer's approach to state cultural institutions, Ochoa proposes a theoretical framework that allows for the importance of individual actors, a multiplicity of agendas and perspectives, and seeks to understand "the contradictory relations between a 'culture of politics' and a 'politics of culture'" (Ochoa Gautier 2001, 381).

It is these contradictory relations, I believe, that make these schools of popular music intriguing and bewildering sites for sociocultural analysis. I undertook this study curious about the extent to which counter-hegemonic cultural practices like *música popular* would be transformed or even compromised by becoming entrenched in hegemonic cultural institutions like the state-sponsored music school. Having navigated both the official and unofficial aspects of these schools, I now believe that before I can adequately answer that question, I must first question the notion of these schools as unproblematically hegemonic institutions.

At both the macro- and micro-levels, the mechanisms of power and authority that affect practice within these schools are more complicated and contradictory than the Gramscian notion of the school as an institution of the integral state that perpetuate hegemonic ideology as a means of "domination by consent" (Whyton 2006, 67). I believe these case studies problematize that model in the following ways: 1) A monolithic conception of the state fails to take into account the disparities between various intersecting spheres of political authority – in this case the national, provincial, and municipal; 2) a

history of "institutional weakness" in the Argentine political system has led to political parties more interested in maintaining clientelist networks of support and power than in any coherent ideology, hegemonic or otherwise; 3) individual actors, primarily middle-level bureaucrats and administrators, often have far more influence than top-down party policy, which limits the effectiveness of democratic forms of protest; and 4) Within these schools, I believe it would be shortsighted to conflate two different forms that power takes. I identify two distinct but interrelated systems of authority, which I call "political" and "cultural." The former entails the formal designation of the power to enact particular policies based on one's position within the institutional hierarchy, while the latter accrues through the performance of cultural competence, both musically and discursively. They can work in concert, which I found generally to be the case in the Falla program, or antagonistically, as they did at EMPA.

Ultimately, I am interested in how these power structures engender particular practices – pedagogical, musical, and discursive – and ideologies, and how these in turn are interrelated with musical aesthetics. In this chapter I will examine these power structures in their specific historical and cultural context, moving from the national level to the provincial and local, and finally examining the intra-institutional power structures in each school, paying specific attention to the roles of the dual system of authority. Because these systems were in conflict at EMPA, a conflict which I believe defined and affected the EMPA community more than any other factor during my time there, I will pay particular attention to that case study. The Falla program, where I found far less analytical reason to differentiate between these two systems of authority, is included mainly for a point of comparison.

The state and hegemony

The state undoubtedly functions as the overriding hegemonic structure in determining practice within these two schools. But it is important to understand that "the state," often treated monolithically in analyses of nationalist cultural politics, is in fact an intersecting complex of actors and agendas, and in terms of its actual effects on cultural practice is often far from an ideologically coherent, consistent authority. As Juan Carlos Tedesco, the Argentine scholar of educational policy, observes,

> instead of a sovereign national state resulting from a political system representative of the country's social forces, there is either a repressive system that prevents the formation of a system of political representation or a wide-open political market that is not dominated by a hegemonic central body. In such a context, the alternatives are either corporatism within the state itself or the subordination of social agents to political doctrines. The relative lack of hegemony that this situation reveals accounts for the constant changes and the ease - at a purely political or ideological level - with which it is possible to switch from one line of argument to another, and from one social theory to another. One of the most visible characteristics of the political scene in Latin America is therefore the yawning gap between words and reality, between rule and practice, between the possibility of taking a decision and ability to put it into effect (Tedesco 1989, 459).

Even in nation-states with as centralized, ideologically conceived and authoritarian a national government as Cuba, cultural policy (particularly in the conceptually fuzzy area of efforts to officialize popular culture) is often most meaningfully shaped by individual, mid-level bureaucrats who may disagree, misunderstand each other or the cultural practice in question, and change their opinions over time, as has been the case with rap music, *nueva trova* and Afro-Cuban religious and dance musics, among others (Baker 2005; Moore 2006).

In contemporary Argentina, where a democratic and federalist system has resulted in a relatively weak national government and greater degree of autonomy (particularly regarding education) at the provincial and local level, the model of a monolithic state hegemony is

even more problematic. Scholars of Argentine political history have observed that Argentina has been "plagued with widespread institutional weakness" (Levitsky and Murillo 2005, 3). Institutional strength, Levitsky and Murillo argue, is dependent upon two factors: enforcement, or the degree to which rules exist on paper coincide with the way that they exist in practice; and stability of rules through fluctuations in power and passing of offices from one interest group to another. Twentieth- and early twenty-first century Argentine political systems have been characterized by low degrees of both stability and enforcement, despite frequently being ruled by highly authoritarian regimes. For example, in the period between 1928 and 2003, the country experienced fourteen military coups d'etat, while only two elected presidents – Juan Perón and Carlos Menem – finished their elected term without being deposed or forced out of office. Furthermore, both of those presidents altered the national constitution in order to prolong their own terms in office. Heads of state, whether they have been democratically elected or de facto military rulers, have systematically sought to subvert the system of checks and balances by stacking the Supreme Court with allies and removing opponents (Helmke 2005). If fact, between 1960 and 1999, Supreme Court justices served an average term of less than four years, despite supposedly being appointed for lifetime tenure (Spiller and Tommasi 2000, 22-23). And the national legislature has also been disproportionately influenced by strong party bosses – typically, province governors – at the provincial level, as they are unilaterally afforded the right to draw up the party lists of candidates for the Chamber of Deputies, and seats are then parceled out by percentage of party vote according to proportional representation (Jones and Hwang 2005). The result of these processes, by which individuals at the highest levels of political authority are invested with great degrees of power and autonomy, but have little ability to enact lasting change that

is not simply reversible by their successors, is a political system that has been characterized as "clientelist" (Jones and Hwang 2005; Auyero 2005) and having low levels of "horizontal accountability" (O'Donnell 1998) -- that is, one where political alliances are formed not out of shared ideology but rather pragmatic self-interested decisions about who is likely to provide greatest access to resources and power, and where non-majority interest groups have little access to participation in democratic processes.

Such a system is sharply at odds with a Gramscian notion of an integral state hegemony where the state's "corporate interests . . . transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too" (Gramsci and Buttigieg 2007, 180-183).. In post-dictatorship Argentina, individual political parties and organizations imbricated in political power structures have rarely had the ideological consistency, much less the stable and protracted control and legitimacy necessary for "domination by consent." Instead, they are often driven by the narrow interests of the group or groups currently in power, who use their privileged position to full advantage while they can, understanding that any systemic changes they implement may well be fleeting when power changes hands.

Since the return of democratic rule in 1983, there has unquestionably been an increase in the extent to which Argentines have access to those in political power, and expect a certain level of accountability from government. Enrique Peruzzotti, an Argentine political scientist, believes that this general trend is traceable to the few organizations dedicated to human rights issues that emerged within Argentina under the repressive military regime, and has expanded to include a wide network of non-governmental organizations, social movements, and media devoted to watchdog journalism (Peruzzotti 2005, 229-237). But

while Peruzzotti celebrates the more democratic public sphere that allows for grassroots mass protest, strikes, *escraches* (public denouncements of figures perceived to be guilty of abuse of power or delinquency) and other mobilizations, he does allow that they can, in fact, work too well: in cases where institutional corruption and failure is widespread, the greater degree of transparency only further serves to erode public confidence in the institutions of power.

Based on my own conversations between 2003 and 2007 with students, teachers, and other Argentines who had witnessed the rocky and frequently changing political and public landscape, I would argue that such an erosion of public confidence has already taken place. Few of the students and teachers in these schools expressed any credence in the notion of government figures acting in the public interest; rather they believed that most bureaucrats were interested primarily in self-promotion and self-preservation, and therefore in the face of neglect or malfeasance, one of the public's only expedient means of pursuing redress was to threaten those politicians' interests through protest, *escraches*, and other disruptions in the public sphere. In cases where that neglect or malfeasance become normalized, so too do the mechanisms of protest and civil disobedience.

Given that two entirely separate governmental bodies are responsible for the oversight and administration of the two schools in this study, it is perhaps unsurprising that the sorts of conflicts, and the ways that the students and teachers at each institution choose to become actors in the larger political and public sphere, are markedly different. I believe that these differences pervade the hierarchical organization of the schools, affecting all levels and aspects of daily life within them, including the curriculum, the use of space, interpersonal power dynamics within and beyond the classroom, and ultimately musical

aesthetics. In order to understand the sources and ramifications of these differences, it is useful first to consider the macro-level structures of power and organization at the extra-institutional level.

Political organization: national, provincial, and municipal

The Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda and the tango and folklore department of the Conservatorio Municipal "Manuel de Falla" are, of course, not merely hierarchically organized institutions in their own regard, but are also organisms within a larger state apparatus, beholden to its regulations and dependent upon it. Both schools do draw ideologically, at least implicitly, on notions of a nationalist culture, and benefit from a history of politicians' interest, at the national level, in supporting populist expressions of national culture. Nonetheless, the nation-state is far less influential in the functioning of both schools than provincial (in the case of EMPA) and municipal (in the case of the Falla) governments.

Since 1996 the capital city of Buenos Aires has functioned as an autonomous political unit, independent from the surrounding province of Buenos Aires and with an executive and legislative branch appointed by popular vote. Prior to this change, the city had been run by an *intendente*, an executive position directly appointed by the national president. This was the final step in a process of decentralization that began during the last dictatorship and which resulted in provincial and local authorities assuming greater control over, and responsibility for running, state services, particularly education (Murillo 1999, 39-40).

The public school system within the capital, including the Manuel de Falla conservatory, falls under the purview of the municipal government, while the EMPA is

under the authority of the provincial ministry of education. Thus, while these schools are only a few kilometers from each other, share some of the same faculty, and are open to the same potential population of students,[33] they operate within separate political power structures. This presents a unique opportunity to explore the ways in which these different structures engender different kinds of practices and meanings to arise out of roughly the same curricular materials.

Extra-institutional power structures: local government

The Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda was formed in 1986 under the oversight of José Gabriel Dumón, at that time the director general of education and culture for the province of Buenos Aires. Dumón was a career politician at the provincial and eventually national levels, and member of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR), the center-right political party that had come to power at both the provincial and national level following the fall of the military dictatorship in 1983. The UCR's control of the province of Buenos Aires, under Governor Alejandro Almendáriz, lasted until 1987 and has never since been regained. The center-left Peronist or Justicialist Party (PJ), has maintained uninterrupted control of the provincial executive branch for the subsequent two decades. And although the PJ has a stronger ideological and historical connection to populist cultural and educational projects than did the UCR, the school has suffered from near total neglect from the provincial authorities since the Peronists have had control of the provincial Ministry of Education.

[33] While both schools are funded principally through the local (provincial or municipal) government, there is no residency requirement for attendance at either. Many students I interviewed had considered both programs before deciding on one, and more than a few ended up transferring from one to the other.

It is possible that the school's association with the rival party at its genesis may account at least partially for the neglect it has been shown by provincial officials in the ministry of education in the subsequent years. Murillo (1999, 46) reported similar forms of systematic favoritism and neglect in the relationship between different teachers' unions and the national and provincial governments during the same time period based on the degree to which these unions allied themselves with the political party in power or its rival. If in fact the school's historical association with the Radicales is at least partially to blame for the lack of support it has received from Peronist governments, it would be no small irony, given that ideologically most of the teachers and employees within the school are much further from the UCR's positions than they are from Peronism. Most of the teachers that I spoke to did not claim an official party affiliation, but as a group they generally espoused political viewpoints that were considerably more left-leaning than either of the main Argentine political parties. Nonetheless, such processes of favoritism and exclusion based on party loyalty rather than ideology are entirely in keeping with the narrow-interest clientelism that has characterized Argentine politics at both a national and provincial level.

By contrast, the tango/folklore program, a recent (2004) innovation at the older Conservatorio Superior "Manuel de Falla," emerged somewhat more gradually from a pre-existent classical institution, and has not yet had the longevity necessary to determine how it will fare under governments substantially at odds with the one under which it was formed.[34] From 2000 until late 2007 the municipal government was controlled first by center-left Peronist politicians Aníbal Ibarra and then his former vice-mayor Jorge Telerman, whose

[34] Mauricio Macri's PRO party, a fiscally and socially conservative coalition, was elected during the final month of my field work. Macri would not assume office, however, until several months after my research concluded.

own previous career had included stints as Minister of Culture, and who is co-owner of the *ND/Ateneo* theater, an important downtown venue for tango, *folklore*, jazz and other music. That is to say, during the period that the conservatory finally expanded their curriculum to include programs in *música popular,* the municipal government was in the control of the (relatively) progressive party that has historically had a far closer relationship with popular music and populist discourse, and furthermore was led by an administrator who had a direct financial interest in the popularity of tango, *folklore*, and jazz.

The conservatory as a whole dates back to 1920, and has been officially accredited as an *Instituto Superior* – that is, one that awards tertiary, non-university degrees – since 1965 in classical music following the French conservatory model (http://www.buenosaires.gov.ar/areas/cultura/ens_artistica/falla.php).

The tango/folklore program was approved during a formal reorganization of the curriculum in 2003 that also opened new *Superior*-level programs in ethnomusicology, music education, early music and jazz. The new four-year, separate degree in the composition and performance of tango and folklore began in 1988 as a year-long course in the "rhythms and forms of *folklore*" within the classical program of study, taught by guitarist and composer Juan Falú. By 1998, interest and support for the classes had grown and Falú received support to expand the class to become a two-year sequence (Sima 2007, p.c.). Falú had unsuccessfully lobbied for the expansion of this curricular area into its own degree program several times before, but ultimately prevailed in gaining approval from the municipal authorities to open the current program in 2004, and has since acted as its sole artistic director. Marta Sima, who at the time was acting as *asesora pedagógica* (pedagogical advisor) to the entire conservatory, was assigned to help Falú develop a formal curricular plan and

proposal, and has since been acting as coordinator for the tango/folklore program exclusively. Sima believes that one of the reasons this proposal gained governmental support where earlier attempts had not was their ability to articulate the project in terms that borrowed from official nationalist discourse and municipal legislation, citing the 1996 municipal law declaring the tango "an integral part of Argentine cultural patrimony," and that its "study [and] artistic, scientific, or historical research [and] its teaching or diffusion of knowledge about it[35]" are "of national interest" (Ley no. 24.684).

The fact that Buenos Aires' municipal legislature concerned itself with symbolic matters of defining national patrimony in the first year of its existence as an independent government body is indicative of the ways that nationalist ideology has been deployed in decentralized ways in the federalist system. This also indicates the close relationship that still remains between the municipal and national government despite the former's recent electoral autonomy. This relationship remains comparatively closer than that between the provinces and the federal government; despite formally having a structurally less prominent role in national government than the provinces (it has fewer representatives in the legislative bodies, for example) the capital city of Buenos Aires remains the primary commercial, cultural and political center of power. Important municipal posts are perceived to carry enough power and importance to be not only stepping stones to national positions, but in fact more important than (some) national posts in their own right. In the hotly contested 2007 election for the position of Jefe de Gobierno (chief of government, the head executive

[35] e.g. "*su enseñanza o divulgación*"

position) of the city of Buenos Aires, for example, the presidency supported the campaign of Daniel Filmus, then Minister of Education in the presidential cabinet.[36]

It is significant that the version of the curricular plan for the program that finally won official approval was not for a *folklore* program, but rather one that juxtaposed the rural *folklore* traditions with the tango, a music that is strongly indexical of the capital city. This choice demonstrates a flexibility and accommodation on the part of the program's founders to the school's urban setting. Falú himself is predominantly a *folklore* musician, and as a native of Tucumán province and nephew of Eduardo Falú, one of the most prominent composers and guitarists of the 1960s *folklore* boom, he is an unequivocal representative of the rural *música popular*. As Sima joked with me when giving me a tour of the school, they had considered naming the classroom where Falú and his colleague and fellow *tucumano* Juan Quintero teach guitar lessons "the Tucumán classroom" in honor of their pride in their native province and its rich musical history.

In theory, the two halves of the degree are given equal emphasis; all of the students in the Falla program are expected to take equal amounts of coursework in *folklore* and tango, and the presence on faculty of prominent tango musicians such as pianist Nicolás Ledesma and bandoneonist Pablo Mainetti certainly add credibility to the program's claim to prominence in tango instruction. But in practice, Juan Falú remains such a strong influence over the makeup of the student body (many students I interviewed cited him as the key influence in their decision to enroll in the program), faculty makeup (he was given full

[36] In one of the only instances I witnessed of Falla professors participating publicly in political activity, Liliana Herrero, who alongside a prominent career as a *folklore* singer teaches philosophy and ethics courses at the Falla, appeared in campaign ads for Filmus during this election cycle, a further connection between the structures of authority within and beyond the school.

authority to hand-pick the professors who teach there) and curriculum that it is unsurprising that the *folklore* presence is considerably more prevalent than tango in the cultural life of the school. While several of the senior-level students had regular paying gigs in tourist-themed professional tango groups, the majority of the independent student-led musical side projects that I had the opportunity to hear were *folklore* or *folklore*-influenced, and the student-organized extracurricular performances often imitated rural lifeways, emphasizing collaborative *peñas* featuring collective dancing and typically rural foods such as *locro* (a hominy stew) and a variety of empanadas.[37] While I do not mean to suggest that either the students' or the directors' interest in tango is disingenuous or less than serious, I do believe that Falú's (and Sima's) success in gaining governmental support for their project can be attributed at least in part to their savvy recognition of the more relevant symbolic capital in tango, and their willingness to acknowledge and use to their own advantage the official discourse that privileges that urban form of music over the rural musical genres that are Falú's own primary interest.

While EMPA's institutional beginnings can be fairly characterized as a rupture with past practice and policy – there was no similar institution in existence in Argentina at the time of its founding – the Falla program in tango/folklore came about more as a gradual adaptation of existing structures to accommodate a new curricular and pedagogical vision. But this is not to suggest that the existing hegemonic structures and ideologies which privileged the Western classical repertoire easily capitulated and accommodated this new

[37] Although empanadas are a nationally and internationally popular food, there exist locally specific variations in recipe – such as the sweet, raisin-infused meat mixture popular in Córdoba province, or the spicier beef variety popular in the Argentine northwest – that frequently appeared at *peñas* where Falla student groups played, where the preference for these over the more pedestrian *porteño* varieties is a way to demonstrate a certain worldliness – a somewhat intra-national cosmopolitan cachet.

institutional space, nor that some sense of rupture was not necessary first. Rather, Marta Sima was quick to articulate in our first meeting that she believes that through public advocacy the EMPA program "opened up a space" for the growth of similar programs after the high profile of some of EMPA's teachers and graduates, and its longevity had added a sense of legitimacy to the project of institutional education in *música popular* (Sima 2007, p.c.). Nonetheless, in the different ways that the institutions' directors, teachers and students have addressed intra- and extra-institutional conflict, the Falla program has been characterized by a considered set of compromises between the hegemonic conservatory power structures in which it operates and desires to move toward a more democratic cultural space, while the EMPA program has developed into a cultural space where direct and frequently antagonistic conflict is not only permitted but normalized.

Intra-institutional power structures: the dual system

The Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda is an institution that is functionally equivalent to any of the provinces' classical conservatories; it has its own director and vice-director, faculty, and *Centro de Estudiantes* – an elected board of students who are formally responsible for collecting and disbursing funds for the operation of the school. The Falla's tango/folklore program, on the other hand, exists as a branch of the larger Conservatorio Superior de Música. In theory, this ought to afford the program's authorities a lesser degree of autonomy in determining the shape of the school's daily operations; the program's two main authorities, Marta Sima and Juan Falú hold titles (pedagogical adviser and academic coordinator respectively) that place them lower in the institutional hierarchy, leaving them ultimately answerable to the conservatory's main director, who holds an affiliation with the

classical program. Likewise, the conservatory's Centro de Estudiantes is elected and housed at the central campus, where the classical programs are based, and the tango/folklore program must appeal to their authorities when requesting funds for instrument repair, cleaning supplies, and other incidentals. This process is complicated and has at least occasionally resulted in Sima and other faculty paying for school expenses out of pocket when what they see as necessary expenses have been denied or the bureaucratic process for reimbursement became too cumbersome (Sima 2007, p.c.). Nonetheless, despite these structural differences, in practice it seemed that the participants in the Falla program – from authorities and teachers down to students -- were afforded a far greater degree of institutional autonomy and flexibility in determining the "structuring structures" that shaped their daily experience. In part, I believe this can be attributed, somewhat ironically, to the *less* democratic ways that the municipal educational system has allowed the Falla program to constitute its faculty: essentially, Falú as academic coordinator was given complete authority to personally select the entire faculty, while at the EMPA (and all provincial schools) all positions, from teachers of individual courses up to school directors must be selected through an a process known as a *concurso* (competition) where potential applicants are assigned point values based on their degrees held and previous work experience within the bureaucratic system.

Given that popular musics were, up until very recently, systematically omitted from formal music education programs in Argentina it is perhaps unsurprising that frequently those musicians who have attained a high degree of respect and accomplishment as popular musicians do not necessarily hold formal academic credentials. None of the popular musicians – students or teachers – with whom I spoke felt that this interfered in any way

with these musicians' ability to teach their subject effectively (in fact, no small number of them were actively scornful of the notion of academic credentials for performing popular music) yet many of the teachers and administrators reported that it had presented serious obstacles to these teachers' ability to function within the school bureaucracy. In effect, there remains a disconnection between the forms of cultural capital that are recognized and valued in the sphere of *música popular* and in the formal educational system.

As a result, I think these two separate sets of cultural capital generate within the school two independent systems of authority: the formal and official system of titles, degrees and appointments that I will call *political authority*, and the unofficial, socially and discursively constructed system of respect that I will term *cultural authority* that community members establish by demonstrating cultural competence through performance. These performances are both musical and discursive, and involve established sociocultural values and aesthetics, which are intertwined. These performative processes will be the focus of Chapter 4; in this chapter I wish to focus first on the ways these dual systems of power and authority intersect and how their separate interests are resolved. In short, I believe that the relative harmony in the Falla program between students, teachers, administrators, and the governmental bodies responsible for their oversight, and the relative discord and constant tension between the parties in the EMPA system can be attributed largely to the different approaches they take to reconciling these dual systems of authority.

The Falla program in general, and administrator Marta Sima in particular, have been consistent in relegating the system of political authority to a function of facilitating and legitimating the system of cultural authority. At the EMPA, on the other hand, the director and provincial authorities have taken precisely the opposite tack, assuming that the forms of

political authority conferred by the state ought to take precedence, and students and many of the teachers have strongly resisted their attempts to impose that authority when it impedes upon the social values of the informal system.

Escuela en Lucha: **Conflict as a normative value**

When I first arrived at the Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda in September of 2006, it was impossible not to notice the pervasive signs of recent and continuing conflict throughout the space. Even the narrow front façade of the building announced this fact to passersby: one side had been painted by students with a caricature of a teacher, head thrown back in anger or frustration and fist clenched (Figure 3.1). The other side bore a plaque indicating that the building had been the home of two young men who had been "disappeared" (presumably kidnapped and murdered) by the military or police during the dictatorship, while a blank space underneath this plaque bore a handwritten inscription in marker declaring that the plaque naming the second victim had been "stolen by cowards" (Figure 3.2). Finally, the glass panes of the front door were painted across with the message that succinctly expressed what would become the fundamental characteristic of the space during my time there: "*Escuela en lucha,"* it read, "School in conflict" (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.1: Doorway art at the EMPA

Figure 3.2: Plaques memorializing victims of dictatorship outside EMPA

Figure 3.3: "School in conflict" painted on EMPA entrance

Inside the building, large, hand-painted banners that had been hung by the Centro de Estudiantes alluded to a recent *escrache* – a loud, public denouncement of the school's director – by a group of students that had culminated in the director locking herself in her office and calling the police, claiming that she felt threatened by the unruly students' demonstration. "The director has returned, the police have [also] returned," read one. "The director: liar, traitor, coward" read another. A group of disgruntled teachers had collectively composed and claimed authorship to a text that was hung next to the official class schedule. A series of short phrases, arranged vertically, explained what the teachers "would like to be able to claim" about the school's administration:

> La actual Dirección de la Escuela cumple con sus funciones
> Mentiríamos diciendo que
> Obstaculiza el mejoramiento de la calidad educativa que se
> Proponen las diferentes Areas de la Escuela
> Tenemos la certeza de que

Contribuye a resolver las necesidades de la institución.
No podríamos decir jamás que
Solo les interesa ascender en su carrera jerárquica.
Y de ningún modo negaríamos que
Defienden la autonomía institucional.
Jamás afirmaríamos que
La Dirección coacciona a los alumnos y profesores

The current school administration carries out its functions.
We would be lying, to say that
They hinder the improvements to educational quality that are
being proposed by the different school departments.
We are certain that
They contribute to address the institution's needs.
We could never say that
They are only interested in climbing the career ladder.
And in no way could we deny that they
They defend our institutional autonomy.
We would never agree that
The administration coerces students and teachers.

The text's gimmick, which serves to underline the stark gap between the teachers' ideal and reality, is explained at the bottom of the page: Read from the bottom to the top, they claim, the text accurately describes the current situation:

The administration coerces students and teachers.
We would never agree that
They defend our institutional autonomy.
And in no way could we deny that
They are only interested in climbing the career ladder.
We could never say that
They contribute to address the institution's needs.
We are certain that
They hinder the improvements to educational quality that are
being proposed by the different school departments.
We would be lying to say that
The current school administration carries out its functions.

Having been educated in and employed by schools where such uses of public space as a forum for the denouncement of figures of authority would have been highly unusual, I was

at first surprised by how willing teachers and students were to air their grievances about those in power over them in very public, personal and inflammatory ways. In interviews, where I took pains, following IRB protocols, to explain my interlocutors' rights to speak off the record, anonymously, or decline comment on potentially sensitive topics, the most typical response was bemusement at my caution, and a frequently gleeful acknowledgment that they were accustomed to making the most damning of their pronouncements about the school, its officials, and their inadequacies in public, on the record, and with full attribution.

On one hand, a cultural space that allows such direct challenges to authority bespeaks a level of participatory egalitarianism that seemed to me, in the first days of my time in the EMPA, to be in keeping with the ethos of both popular education and *música popular*. But as I came to understand the EMPA as a space that not only permitted, but *necessitated* public, visible conflict over power struggles, I began to see these public demonstrations also as an indictment of a system where less dramatic forms of expressing discontent, and seeking redress, were ineffective. One school official who had been active in the process of petitioning the provincial government for a new building, having followed protocol of formally requesting meetings with officials within the Ministry of Education, recalled advice that one of the authorities had given him: "in our off the record chats, he said, 'look, what you've got to do is *hacer quilombo*, if you don't *hacer quilombo* I can't do anything" (2007 p.c.).

The term that this provincial administrator used, *hacer quilombo*, is the same one that was frequently used by students and teachers alike to refer broadly to any form of political agitation and protest in order to draw attention to their cause. It might best be glossed as "to make a mess," although *quilombo*, a local slang term that literally means "brothel," is

mildly obscene, and makes the official's frank admission that *quilombos* were a prerequisite to getting any governmental attention all the more telling.

One of the groups within the EMPA that has been the source of some of the most well-known and public *quilombos* in the institution's history has been the Centro de Estudiantes. Among other activities, the members of the Centro occupied the school for several months in 2001, and again in 2004. Throughout this period they also enacted *cortes de calle*, public roadblocks that lasted several hours and stopped traffic entirely. *Cortes* had become a frequent form of protest since the growth of the *piquetero* movement in the mid-1990s, and were intended to create enough public outrage and aggravation that politicians would concede to protestors' demands (Auyero 2005). Conveniently, the EMPA is located just a few blocks from one of the most frequent and effective sites for *cortes* in the entire region, the Puente Pueyrredón, a bridge over the Riachuelo river which acts as the main traffic artery between the capital city and the densely populated southern suburbs. Cutting off traffic on this bridge constitutes a major disruption to thousands of travelers, who must take alternate routes that add up to several hours to a commute, and the Centro de Estudiantes, like other groups of protestors, saw it as a dramatic but viable option, the threat of which might be enough to coerce provincial authorities to hear their case. But Ricardo Cantore, a former director of the school, recalled a meeting that he and the other area heads had had with Marcela Mardones, director of artistic education for the province, that suggested quite a different state of affairs:

> One day with the other area heads, we went to see Mardones. Because they thought that [the threat of] cutting off the bridge, all that, we'd see what Mardones thought. …So in the end, it went back and forth, and [one of us] says, no, the idea is that we've got to resolve this [space problem], he says, and this is in 2004. Because the kids are gonna cut off the [Pueyrredón]

> bridge, you see? And Mardones says to him, "look, it doesn't bother me if they cut off the bridge." Because – you see? The other [guy]… thinking that it'll piss them off of you cut off the bridge, but no, what they're thinking is how they can use to their own political benefit your cutting off the bridge See how they can grab it, and with that *quilombo* that results, take away the job from some guy that bothers them. That's how it works (Cantore 2007, p.c.).

If Cantore's understanding of the provincial authorities' position is accurate, then popular manifestations, rather than a source of danger to those in power in fact function as a further source of political capital *for* them. A savvy politician, rather than proactively preventing visible public conflict, can instead take advantage of these disruptions either to foist the blame off on rivals or inferiors, or take credit for visibly controlling or dispersing these problems.

Sociologist Javier Auyero has examined recent popular mobilizations in Argentina such as *saqueos* (lootings) and the *piquetero* movements, paying particular attention to the functions of clientelist networks and the collusion of police and political organizations with nominally illegal and occasionally violent popular protest. Like Cantore, Auyero suggests that rather than understanding popular uprisings as a disruption of routine politics in Argentina, it is important to examine the "continuities between contentious and routine politics" and the ways that organizations in power and the popular mobilizations that nominally oppose them are in fact "mutually imbricated" (Auyero 2005, 253). In the case of the EMPA, I never witnessed anything that would lead me to believe, like in the cases that Auyero examines, that clientelist networks or party operatives were actually colluding with school members in planning or carrying out any of their popular mobilizations. But it is difficult to ascertain whether or not these mobilizations served in practice either to threaten

or to strengthen the positions of the bureaucrats and policy makers who had the ability to enact the changes they sought.

What is more certain is that students, teachers and administrators alike had come to believe that it was only through mobilizations and protest– through the creation of public, disruptive *quilombos* of various sorts – that they could effect change within the system. In fact, more than any particular genre, style or pedagogical approach, I believe that what has come to be the defining characteristic of the EMPA as a music culture is a sense of public and politically engaged struggle as intrinsic to the role of being a popular musician. Ricardo Cantore, one of the most polemic and militant of the school's official interlocutors, put it most plainly:

> I tell the kids, besides working at playing an instrument, practicing, you need to have a rifle on the table. Symbolically, I mean. If you don't know how to defend this, it's no good! Don't think that because you're a great student, because you know how to play a lot, that in this country they're going to recognize you. That doesn't exist, it's a lie! (Cantore 2007, p.c.)

Not all students and teachers believed that this was a positive aspect of instruction at EMPA. While the Centro de Estudiantes is a democratically elected body, functions as the public face and voice for the student body in popular protests and in the media, and actively tries to involve the entire student body in its activities, in practice I observed that a core group of approximately 20 students were involved in most of their activities, out of a total student body of approximately 2000. Some students told me that they did not participate in the Centro's activities because work or other obligations prevented them, but a significant number also expressed some degree of frustration and even alienation from the Centro. Generally, the Centro's most active members were younger students, while older students

tended to drift towards work, their own music-making, or other projects outside of the school. One senior student put it plainly: "All that stuff just leaves you burned out.[38] The Centro de Estudiantes is always the same kids – they're the ones who never practice, who don't want to work, who are more interested in making *quilombo* than in making music." (2006 p.c.) The Centro and the faculty did occasionally find common ground on some issues (in particular, the urgent need for a new building and the fervent dislike of the school's director) and occasionally collaborate in planning public events (such as the march down Avenida Belgrano described in the introduction). Yet many faculty also expressed a reluctance to collaborate too closely with the group, even when their interests were aligned. When one member of the teachers' assembly working toward petitioning the government for funds for a new building, for example, proposed meeting with the Centro members to coordinate a joint effort, another teacher suggested that it would be "like the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo working with Quebracho," referring to two national left-leaning organizations. The former group is primarily associated with human rights issues surrounding the disappearance and murder of dissidents during the last military dictatorship; the latter is a group that advocates the use of violence in pursuit of anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian politics.

Points of conflict: Money and ownership of music

Along with differences of method – generally, the Centro de Estudiantes was far more willing to consider drastic actions such as *cortes* and *escraches* than were the teachers' groups dedicated to the same causes – several teachers expressed to me a concern similar to

[38] "*…te deja limado*"

the students above who felt that the Centro students were generally more concerned with practicing politics for its own sake than in studying music. One of the issues in which these differences had manifested themselves in the years prior to my field research had been the sale of *cuadernillos* – booklets of course materials for both academic and instrumental study. These booklets, assembled by the professors who developed the curriculum, generally comprise material composed or arranged by EMPA professors, including arrangements of both music in the public domain and more recent compositions still under copyright. Until the late 1990s, the students were expected to purchase these packets, which were assembled at a local photocopier and sold for around ten pesos (approximately ten U.S. dollars at that point). The Centro de Estudiantes maintained that this represented an obligatory and unreasonable imposition of a fee for public education, and eventually gained control of the process. Now students must purchase these course packets directly from the Centro students, who are responsible for having them photocopied and collecting the funds. They are printed on the least expensive paper available, stapled together, and sold for around one peso (approximately 30 U.S. cents), the cost of reproducing them.

Like many of the points of contention in the often unwritten or unofficial practices of the EMPA, it is difficult even to get a reliable consensus on what precisely happened with the money collected under the old system. One teacher who had been active in the school during the period, and who objected to the changes to the new system, claimed that this money was used only to cover the costs of printing on high-quality paper and binding (p.c., 2007). The Centro de Estudiantes, in a document that they now append to current course materials, has an alternate explanation. Because I believe the style, as much as the substance,

of the Centro's communiqué is relevant to understanding the current power dynamics and relationship between this group and the faculty, I will quote it at length:

> A review of the accounts by *compañeros* from the C.E.E.M.P.A.[39] ….brought to light a countless number of irregularities in the way that school materials (*cuadernillos*) were being managed within the school. These irregularities ranged from receipts for the copying of packets from a mattress-maker……..maaaatress maker??? [sic] yes *compañeros*, at the address that was listed on the tickets from the "Apolo 11" bookstore THERE WAS A MATTRESS STORE: all the way to completely arbitrary agreements about the value of preparing pedagogical materials (we never understood why some teachers charged for this silly job more than others, of similar quality and professional commitment).
>
> Although the C.E.E.M.P.A. had always expressed its uneasiness with respect to the elevated price of the course packets, never had it found clear evidence of abuse toward the student body. The account is simple: one great part of the "course packets fund" was designated to pay certain teachers, what they considered their honorarium for making [the materials] and another part for a supposed "library fund" (about which nothing could be confirmed) and for "travel costs" for a person in charge of sales and collecting the money… Well, okay… it so happens that a number of this person's incorrect maneuverings were discovered ("well, I always take ought a ten, a twenty [peso note] for my travel expenses…"). It happens that this person was systematically covered for by the different administrators in the school, and by a certain group of teachers who, in defending these mechanisms, defended their own mercantile interests. And in order to defend them, they tossed out the most obscure arguments. From the sensitive "little value for their condition as artists and professionals" to the most repulsive McCarthyism against the C.E.E.M.P.A. Every time that the Centro questions the paternalism and the authoritarianism of some so-called "teacher, artist, celestial entity" of course we are [accused of being] uncomprehending, intolerant, and belligerent (Centro de Estudiantes de la Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda).

The rhetorical register of the document, which combines colloquial diction and the frequent appeal to *compañeros* with gestures toward Marxist political economics (referring to teachers "defend[ing] their own mercantile interests") is typical of populist leftist political organizations in Argentina. Even setting aside the combative and mocking tone with which

[39] Centro de Estudiantes de la Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda.

the documents' authors attack the school authorities, however, I believe that the way that the Centro de Estudiantes chooses to frame this conflict points to some of the tensions in both the systems of political and cultural authority in the school.

It is clear from the students' understanding of events that the system of cultural authority as it functions within the school intersects with the capitalist culture industry and assumptions that surround it in complicated ways. One of the Centro's main complaints about the prior system was that some teachers allegedly chose to charge for their course materials, which in many cases would have consisted of original material (arrangements, exercises) for which these teachers presumably held copyright.

It is unsurprising that there was some inconsistency between teachers in this regard, as many of the teachers (and students) simultaneously hold conflicting and complicated views about cultural and personal claims to ownership of *música popular*. On one hand, many EMPA community members choose to define *música popular* as that which is neither *música culta* ("learned music," a term roughly analogous to "art music" in English) nor *música comercial* – (music created with the sole or principal purpose of generating income – in practice, this term is used mostly to describe pop and mainstream rock) and represents or belongs to the popular classes. But at the same time, in practice most of the teachers (and a fair number of the more advanced students) generate at least a portion of their income from the sale of recordings, published materials, and public performances of *música popular,* and the majority of students in the program aspired towards careers as professional popular musicians themselves. Within the school a variety of practices surrounding and attitudes toward commercial and published music coexist: some professors and student groups sell CDs and other materials (commercially published arrangements, method books) through the

school café, while others donate copies of their material to the school library where, like all of the published and unpublished materials, students may freely copy them. Teachers have taken different approaches to balance the need to make an income from their performing and recording activities (the teacher's salary at the school alone is insufficient to live on; only a few of the administrators at the school do not supplement this job with additional teaching, performing, or recording) with a desire to make their material available to students, who are often of limited financial means.

The Centro de Estudiantes' position on the issue – that educational materials ought to be provided free of charge, and that any obligation of cost to the student represents an illegal de facto tuition charge – has led them to a structurally unusual role for a provincial postsecondary institution. Since the role of the Centro de Estudiantes was officially reinstated as a constitutionally mandated body following the dictatorship (Puiggrós 2003) one of its primary functions is typically the operation of a *cooperadora*, which collects a nominal annual fee from students and controls the use of these funds to purchase and maintain school equipment. In other conservatories in Buenos Aires province, for example, this fee is generally between ten and fifteen pesos ($3.50 - $5.00 U.S.) and for students who are not able to pay, arrangements are made for students to substitute work for the *cooperadora* (Sardo, p.c. 2006). Since the Centro de Estudiantes at the EMPA maintains that public education should be free (*libre y gratuita*), they refuse to collect funds. As a result, a separate and officially extra-institutional organism, the Asociación Amigos de la EMPA (Friends of EMPA Association) sprung up, soliciting donations to purchase and maintain school instruments, cleaning supplies, and other needs. While in theory, this policy is based on an ideological commitment to making public education more accessible to students of limited

means, in practice one might argue that it has also reduced the students' ability to participate democratically in the functioning of the school, as decisions about how, when and why money is used are made by a group of self-selected donors to the school (generally made up of teachers and some students) rather than the elected student representatives.

Points of conflict: Enrollment limits

Without question the largest structural change that the EMPA program has undergone in the twenty-odd years of its existence remains its most contentious: the 2002 decision to move from a capped enrollment to one where no limit was placed on the number of students in the program. In the years since this change has taken, student numbers at the school have ballooned, affecting every aspect of daily experience in the school from the use of space and scarcity of equipment to the way classes are taught. For obvious reasons, the difficulties presented by the already small and inadequate space from the program became greatly exacerbated, and no one with whom I spoke is entirely satisfied with the result. And like most of the main points of conflict within the school culture, the decision to make this policy change represents a node of contradictions and compromises between ideology and practice.

In order to understand how this policy came about, I would like first to briefly revisit some of the EMPA's earlier institutional history, and particularly the ways that the school's mission has evolved over time. When the program was instituted, it was conceived not as a substitute to the classical conservatory system, but rather as a supplement to it. Students were required to have completed a "Ciclo Básico," (Basic Cycle) the five-year introductory curriculum at an accredited state classical conservatory or to provide evidence of equivalent

experience. Much like the de Falla program today, the scope of the curriculum was not so much intended to be a comprehensive training in popular music, but rather a codified and systematic grounding in the conventions of three specific popular genres for already competent classical musicians.

By the late 1980s, however, authorities in the school saw two difficulties with this program: First, they were overwhelmed with requests from interested students who did not have the requisite classical training, but were not able to fill their quotas of eligible students. In order to maintain a student population large enough to justify keeping the school open, they decided that it was prudent and necessary to open a Ciclo Básico of their own. Second, many of the teachers began to suspect that although classical training provided an adequate basis for acquiring technical proficiency on the instrument, that the students might be better served by a beginner's curriculum that introduced them to the specific demands of popular music --including not only technical fluency and musical literacy but the ability to improvise, arrange and compose – from an earlier stage. The school's own Ciclo Básico opened in 1991, although it still required an entrance examination to demonstrate a level of technical proficiency on the student's primary instrument roughly equivalent to one year's formal study. In designing a popular-music-specific Ciclo Básico curriculum, the faculty were somewhat constrained by provincial regulations that required the conservatory *plan de estudios* – the curricular guide that set out the number and duration of courses for each degree plan – to conform with those of all the other provincial conservatories. In effect, that meant that the number of course hours designated for instrumental study, ensemble playing, music history, and "*lenguaje musical*" (musical language; roughly analogous to music theory, analysis and in later years orchestration) were to conform with those requirements determined to be

most appropriate to classical music instruction (See Appendix for the complete *plan de estudios* from each institution). They were, however, free to generate within those curricular confines class materials that were more specifically relevant to popular music. For example, the study of functional harmony at EMPA is far more focused on the practical application of the *cifrado americano* – the chord-symbol system used by jazz and popular musicians in the English speaking world, using the English letters for note names rather than the Spanish (solfège-based) naming system – than it is on four-part chorale-style voice leading or Roman numeral harmonic analysis. Nonetheless, the province-imposed formal structures delimiting the names and durations of courses for the classes, and insisting that the curricular plan at EMPA adapt itself to the ways of the existing classical institutions is one further example of the system of political authority failing to recognize the forms of cultural authority specific to popular music and popular musicians.

Opening up a Ciclo Básico unique to the EMPA did not resolve the school's enrollment problems, however. By the mid-1990s, interest in the school had far exceeded the capacity for the spaces offered to new entrants. Students in the senior years of the program who entered in the late 1990s recalled long lines that formed outside the school days before enrollment began, and camping out in the street for up to three days at a time in order to reserve a place in classes for the year (p.c. 2007). Unsurprisingly, the students became quite dissatisfied with this ordeal, and the Centro de Estudiantes was among the most vocal of groups calling for an end to enrollment caps. One of the Centro's most reliable voices of support among the faculty, Ricardo Cantore, became director of the school in 2001, and in 2003 enacted the new policy. Students entering the school since that date are required to take a placement exam (including both playing and written components) but

there is no minimum level for entrance. It is now common for students in the Ciclo Básico to begin the program with no formal musical training whatsoever (Rogantini, Alvarez 2007 p.c.). Professors who have been teaching in the program since before this change was implemented reported that they have had to lower their expectations of how much material students will be able to learn in a given year, since students enter the program with less of a base of musical knowledge and technical capability on their instruments (Maidana, Saba 2007 p.c.).

The open enrollment policy has affected the curriculum in other less obvious ways as well. Since the school no longer controls the number of students entering any given program in a particular year, it is unusual to see school ensembles with balanced instrumentation. The guitar, both because of its long history as the preeminent instrument in local popular music genres and in rock music, and its relatively low cost, is overwhelmingly popular. Electric bass and voice are also common, followed by (in decreasing popularity) percussion, piano, wind instruments (saxophone and flute being the most common), bandoneón, and bowed strings. The result is that instrumentation in student ensembles does not often resemble the professional ensembles in the genre in question. I observed one jazz combo in the fall semester of 2006, for example, that consisted of five guitarists (one of whom volunteered to play electric bass) and a drummer, and several others that featured multiple guitarists. The school's most advanced tango ensemble, the *orquesta de tango*, needed to bring in "ringer" musicians from outside the school to cover all the violin and bandoneón parts in the original arrangements, but the guitar parts were doubled, and an electric bass complemented the traditional double bass in order to involve all of the interested advanced students.

None of the teachers or students I interviewed about the unlimited enrollment policy saw the changes it brought about as beneficial from a pedagogical or musical standpoint. In fact, quite a few of the teachers and older students lamented what they saw as a declining level of musical performance in the school ensembles based on these accommodations. The topic remains a controversial one within the school, and teachers on both sides of the issue were particularly eager to explain their view to me. The controversy is in no doubt fueled by the rhetorical framing that Cantore, who is no longer director of the school (he remains a teacher and the *jefe de area*, or department chair, of the Ciclo Básico) frequently uses in discussing the issue. Both within the school, in interviews with me and in the local media he has called attempts to cap enrollment tantamount to "cultural genocide." He told me that he "can't see a kid in the street and tell him he can't study music. We might as well just put him in a gas chamber" (Cantore 2007, p.c.). Cantore's flair for politically inflammatory hyperbole is, I suspect, in part a strategy of self-preservation; he is certainly aware that when he made the decision to institute the limitless enrollment he was directly contradicting provincial policy, which determines student capacity based on the number of course hours, teachers, and classrooms available. Like the Centro de Estudiantes, he has long made public appeals to populist notions of free and accessible public education, hoping that the government will find it more politically expedient to accede to their demands *ex post facto* than to wait first for permission or changes in regulations to be passed down from above. In one typical explanation, Cantore explained how he believes that constitutionally guaranteed public education, taken as an ideological starting point, can only lead to the kind of open enrollment policy that he enacted, while simultaneously framing the provincial authorities' objections to exceeding capacity as unconstitutional and even murderous:

> The issue was to see how they could limit the enrollment to resolve so that not a lot of *negritos*[40] would get in, and furthermore that there would be room for those that were there. That was the issue, see? If they don't fit in the place, you've got to kill some so that they do fit, you know? I have, for example, notes from [Director of Artistic Education] Mardones, where she says to me "The director should not have generated false expectations in the students about enrollment," it says, "because he should have taken into account the available space and openings." That is, the [number of] courses and the quantity of students. I see ten kids that come to study, they need more class hours. Not to tell six kids, "don't study, I don't have space, I don't have [open] courses." And besides the courses, there's no room. It's not my problem, I say. The state has to say to me, "You've got to find room for these kids to study." Because it's in the Constitution. Nothing more (Cantore 2007, p.c.).

In essence, what Cantore has done in moving toward an open enrollment system – and while he did not do so unilaterally or single-handedly, he remains the authority most vocally supportive of and associated with this move – is to re-imagine the very purpose of the school. The EMPA's founders had essentially imagined a conservatory of popular music – in fact, Manolo Juárez, one of the primary originators of the *folklore* curriculum, still refers to the school by that term (Pedroso 2007, 57). That is, the structure of the school, from the curricular content to the selection of teachers to the criteria for allowing admission to the school, all followed from the premise of generating the highest levels of professional attainment possible within the cultural sphere of *música popular.*[41] Under the new model, the notion of providing maximum access to free public education is the motivating principle,

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[40] Literally "little black kids," in Argentina colloquially the term refers not only to the relatively rare African-descended phenotype, but to any darker complexion, and particularly to those with visible *mestizo* or indigenous features, and can also be used generally to refer to any lower-class individual. Race as socially constructed in Argentina is a complex phenomenon that intersects, like in many places, with issues of class and gender, as well as local identity. The majority of the student body at EMPA would not be racialized as non-white in Buenos Aires; Cantore's insinuation that the authorities see this population as *negritos* probably has as much to do with their poor, working-class location and (desired) affiliation with a populist arts movement as it does with bodily aspects of race.

[41] The EMPA website's institutional history, for example, reports that the sole "indispensable" criterion for selecting the faculty was that they all be professional musicians; many of these did not have formal pedagogical training or hold teaching degrees (Cantore).

while producing high-quality music and musicians is a means, rather than an end in itself. In other words, the values of the system of political authority – even when those values are oriented toward changing or challenging that authority – have come to take precedence over the system of cultural authority, which privileged musical practice and aesthetics.

Points of conflict: The director

Nowhere was the conflict between the two systems of authority in the EMPA clearer than in the ways that the students and faculty clashed with the school's director, Adriana Linkewickz. She came up in nearly every interview and conversation I had about the school, from my first meeting with the two *jefes de area* in the school who had agreed to support my research project to Centro de Estudiantes assemblies to informal hallway conversations with students. Her presence – or at least her influence – was pervasive. Nonetheless, it is only with some hesitation that I introduce her as a principal actor in this ethnographic narrative. It is not that I doubt her importance; clearly as the highest authority within the school the director had a significant ability to affect both the structures of authority and daily practice within the school. But while "the director" (she was rarely referred to by name) arose in nearly every conversation I had with students and teachers about the school, I never spoke with her directly. I was hardly unique in this regard. Linkewickz was a scarce presence in the hallways and classrooms of the EMPA; most of the students I spoke with told me that they did not even know what she looked like to point her out to me. I believe part of the reason that the director was so easily demonized was that she remained a figurehead and almost more of a mythical concept than an actual human being to many of the students in the school.

Of course, my own lack of communication with her remains a more problematic concern for the purposes of this study. At first, it was by design that I avoided her presence on the advice of my initial contact at the school who had arranged for permission for me to undertake my research project. Javier Cohen, the chair (*jefe de area*) of the tango department, knew me from my master's research and had read my initial dissertation prospectus and shared it with several other EMPA teachers, all of whom greeted the project with enthusiasm. Cohen's only misgiving, he told me initially, was that the school was in a moment of maximum internal chaos where it might be difficult to gain a meaningful sense of the school as it normally functions. "Like when you're crazy, and you need to visit a psychoanalyst," he explained half-jokingly, "only at the moment I think maybe we're too crazy to go to the psychiatrist!" Given the highly embattled position of the director (our meeting took place just a few weeks after the *escrache* confrontation between the students and director where she had called the police in fear of her own physical well-being), he advised me to secure the permission of the vice-director and individual teachers, but avoid talking directly to the director. He felt that by virtue of my association with him and the other teachers, it was likely that the director would immediately perceive my presence as a threat, and possibly a subversive attempt to remove her from power.

I was ambivalent about beginning my research without securing permission from the school's highest authority, but assured by Cohen and the enthusiasm with which other teachers greeted my project, I decided to follow his advice at first. I planned to conduct several months of initial research in the school and only then approach the director for an interview after I had established a stable presence in the school and I could formulate interview questions that were fair to her and addressed the key issues I needed to understand

from multiple perspectives. Before I could arrange an interview, however, she took a lengthy medical leave starting in early 2007 that lasted until my field research period ended. Linkewickz's hands-off directorial style made her very difficult to reach in any case; not even the department chairs had her home phone number or e-mail.

While of course I believe that my research would have benefited from being able to consult with the director, and had I known that I could not count on being able to conduct an interview at a later date I would have sought one out before the end of the 2006 school year, I do ultimately believe that it was prudent to follow Cohen's advice and begin my research under his authority rather than immediately seeking out the director. There is precedent for such an ethnographic approach; Georgina Born's ethnography of IRCAM involved direct interaction with people at all levels of the institutional hierarchy except the institute's well-known, famously autocratic director, Pierre Boulez. While Boulez's presence and influence is felt throughout the text – he was essentially afforded free reign to create the IRCAM according to his own ideological and aesthetic priorities – Born chose specifically to avoid interviewing or being too closely associated with Boulez as she believed it would interfere with her ability to solicit sincere and complete responses from all of the other members of the IRCAM community (Born 1995, 9). Similarly, had Cohen's misgivings proved wrong, and had I managed to succeed in convincing Ms. Linkewickz to support my research, I am convinced that I would have been met with a far less cooperative and enthusiastic reception from the teachers and students had I been perceived as somehow in association with the director, and ultimately would have had access to far less rich ethnographic data.

My own misgivings notwithstanding, it became clear to me that the director's position in the inter-school conflict needed to be addressed analytically. In a school culture characterized by deep political divisions and factionalism, both among and between faculty and student groups, the one issue on which everyone seemed united was the director: she was universally reviled. Along with the aforementioned *escrache* and the signs covering the walls the day that I first visited EMPA, one of the most significant political events of the year was the petition to the provincial authorities in which the faculty had voted unanimously to call for the director's immediate resignation.

I wish to examine some of this anti-director discourse not because I wish to reify these *ad hominem* attacks themselves, but rather as a way to examine the value system within the school's sphere of cultural authority, and the reasons why this director, in the cultural imaginary, represents such an offense. Linkewickz no longer works at the EMPA, having stepped down in late 2007. Because of this, and because her tenure there was relatively brief – two years, interrupted by two lengthy medical leaves – I am less interested in what these critiques of her may say about her personal shortcomings as a director, and more interested in them as expressions of how the school as a cultural system understands the ideal roles of the cultural and political systems of authority.

One of these anecdotes, related to me by one of the EMPA teachers, concerned an alleged interaction between the director and the school's most senior teacher, guitarist Aníbal Arias. Arias, over eighty years of age at the time of my research, is perhaps the school's quintessential example of the living tango tradition. He began performing tango professionally in 1940, and has performed and recorded with a lengthy list of the most important musical figures in the tango world over the last half century. Among the most

notable accomplishments on his lengthy résumé is his tenure in the last quartet of Aníbal Troilo. Students and teachers alike speak about Arias in loving, almost reverential tones, praising his generosity and humility just as much as his extensive musical knowledge and virtuosic, expressive playing. With that background, an otherwise unremarkable interaction took on an air of scandal as related to me by an EMPA teacher:

> I was in the office, and Aníbal Arias came in. I think he needed a classroom, I don't remember. He asked the director, and she asked him, "Who are you?[42]" "Who are you?!" To Aníbal Arias! I say, you can't be the director of this school, and say to Aníbal Arias "Who are you?"

There could be no clearer demonstration of the system of political authority failing (quite literally, in this case) to recognize the system of cultural authority.

Another similar anecdote was related in late 2006 by a student during a general assembly of the student body. The student was a member of one of the school's *orquestas* – three large ensembles (one representing each of the three genres) that, while not officially part of the required *plan de estudios,*[43] rehearse during school hours, directed by the faculty and made up principally of students. They are the most advanced ensembles in the school, and they often serve as its unofficial musical ambassadors, performing at local public schools, theaters, and other public functions. As the student recalled,

> I went into the office to ask if one of the *preceptores* (administrative supervisors) could stay around on Saturday to open the building late so we could get the equipment and instruments for the jazz *orquesta*, because we were going to play a concert. And I asked the director, and she looked at me

[42] i.e."*¿Quién es Ud.?"* While the director´s use, in this narrative framing, of the formal address rather than the informal *voseo* demonstrates a proper amount of respect for a senior, unknown gentleman in this case it also demonstrated a further lack of understanding of the context-specific cultural codes. Arias was well-known (and further beloved) by students for his informal and friendly manner, inviting them to call him by his first name and the more egalitarian form of address.

[43] The *orquestas* were finally recognized as a formal part of the curriculum in 2008.

> and said, "Oh, we have an *orquesta*? [laughter] And I didn't know what to say, but… "Yes, yes, actually we have three."

Presumably, the director was familiar with the content of the curriculum, but since the *orquestas*, however well-established, were officially an extracurricular and unofficial ensemble at that point, they apparently were beyond the purview of her authority and she was unaware of them.

I think it is significant that it is anecdotes of this sort, rather than complaints about the director's ability to fulfill her bureaucratic function, that formed the overwhelming majority of the discourse that I encountered during the year. When the faculty presented their petition to the Secretary of Artistic Education calling for the director's resignation, they did enumerate some such complaints, but it seemed to me that "the director," in the public imaginary, was far more at fault for failing to recognize the cultural authority than for malfeasance within the sphere of political authority.

While these stories, if true, certainly represent an exceptional degree of either willful neglect or ineptitude, I think it is short-sighted to see them merely as the symptom of a single individual failing to do her job appropriately. Rather, the province-wide system of political authority for the conservatory system fails to take into account the cultural authority, or the possibility of a distinct institutional culture and set of values and practices, for a school of popular music. Adriana Linkewickz was selected, like all directors for the school have been, by a *concurso* – an open competition where candidates are ranked numerically based on their work experience and level within the provincial bureaucracy, as well as the perceived quality of their proposed educational plan. The judges that make these decisions are external to the school, consisting of one provincial representative and directors

from other conservatories in the province. None of these officials have experience or training in popular music (Cohen, p.c. 2008). Neither, in this case, did the individual they selected to oversee the school; Linkewickz is a classical pianist by training. One of the most measured and charitable evaluations of the director came from a teacher who had known her from working in another, classical conservatory in the province. "It's not that she's a bad person," he told me, "but that she just never understood the history here, how this school is different" (p.c. 2006).

Points of conflict: The building

In October of 2006, one of the first interactions I had with the EMPA community as a whole was the public march and protest, described in the introduction, in demand of a budget and new building for the school. Although I did not appreciate it at the time, this march was unusual in its inclusiveness; it had been jointly organized by teachers and students from a variety of groups, and even the director and vice-director participated.[44] The EMPA, with a larger student body then ever after four years of limitless enrollment, had reached a point where the already meager space and resources were cramped to the point of unfeasibility.

The school building on Avenida Belgrano, two floors of a converted house above a separately rented shop space had itself been a stopgap measure rented by the provincial government in December of 2002 to house the growing school population while construction began on a new school building. Several plans to purchase and begin

[44] The director's participation did little to ameliorate the tense relationship between the administration and the student body; in fact the Centro de Estudiantes saw fit to criticize it as hypocritical during several subsequent open assemblies.

construction on this building were derailed over the following years. In 2004, the province purchased a plot of land a few blocks to the south, and according to the EMPA official history, the Director General of Culture and Education "committed to 'the complete financial underwriting of the construction'" of a new building on this plot (http://empa.edu.ar/historia%20institucional.htm). As of the march in October 2006, there had been no further evidence of construction or plans to begin it at the site.

While the rented building on Belgrano had originally been an improvement from the smaller and more decrepit primary school building where they had been sharing space, by the time my fieldwork had started it had become an untenable setting. The student body had expanded to over two thousand students, and additional classrooms had been rented at several nearby "annexes," including space next to a woodworking shop where classes in ear training competed with the noise from the neighbors' power tools. The atmosphere at the main school building was hardly more serene. The shop front that occupied the ground floor, when the EMPA relocated there, had been a store selling athletic shoes. In the intervening years the store closed and in its stead a private gym had moved in. High-volume techno music accompanying aerobics classes often radiated out of the lower floor's open windows and into the classrooms above. During the warm and humid spring months of October and November when both the school and the gym kept all the windows open in an attempt to keep the temperature bearable, the noise was such that it made conversations and low-volume rehearsing difficult in the auditorium, the school's largest classroom. Many students told me about the memorable day a few weeks after the march when the director of one *folklore* ensemble became so frustrated by the sound interfering with his rehearsal that he threw a chair out the second-floor window onto the gym's terrace below.

The difficulties with the space truly grew to a head, however, in March of 2007, several weeks before the school year was to begin. Provincial building inspectors declared the building unsafe, failing to meet safety code for having a narrow and slippery staircase, an insufficient number of exits, and a number of other violations that presumably had escaped their notice in prior years. They declared a delay to the start of the school year while the department of infrastructure for the province made alternative arrangements. Immediately, many teachers and students cynically began to warn me that it may be several weeks more, or even a full month, before classes would begin. As it turned out, the delay was far longer, and more complicated, than even the most pessimistic of their predictions.

The first solution that the provincial authorities proposed to the space problem was to close off only the top floor of the school building, letting classes begin on the lower floors while additions and repairs were undertaken. Since space would be limited, only instrument and ensemble classes would be held, while "academic" classes (history, *lenguaje musical*, and other subjects) would not begin the school year. The faculty met in open assembly and voted to reject this proposal; the consensus was that any acceptable solution would need to treat all classes (and importantly, all of their teachers; presumably if some classes did not begin it would be possible that those teachers would not be paid their full salary) equally. The next potential solution, also rejected by the teachers' assembly, was for the province to provide the school with a series of annexes – sometimes single classrooms, sometimes several together – dispersed throughout the southern suburbs. The teachers argued that not only were the potential commutes involved between these locations untenable for students and teachers who would be required to travel between buildings during the day, but that

several of these annexes were located in high-crime areas where students coming out of evening classes well after dark carrying instruments risked becoming targets for muggers.

These successive rounds of negotiations between the provincial authorities and the faculty took several week beyond the point at which the school year was scheduled to begin. The Centro de Estudiantes called an assembly in early April in which the student body nearly unanimously voted to support the teachers' decision to refuse to begin the school year until their conditions were met: that the province provide them with a single supplemental locale large enough to accommodate all of the classes not able to fit in the reduced Avenida Belgrano space and equipped with the necessary amenities – such as electricity – which had been absent in some of the province's past offerings.

The teachers had deliberately chosen to avoid the term "strike" to characterize their decision – instead, they clarified, they were not beginning classes but the school building would be open and the faculty would remain "in permanent assembly" – that is, with all the faculty whose class hours were scheduled present at the school and meeting to plan successive courses of political action until their demands were met. Many teachers also felt that it was important to encourage students' active presence in the building, and to minimize the loss of learning time. As a result, a committee of teachers sought volunteers from among the faculty to teach open introductory classes in their subject area. Since the upper level of the school, as well as the auditorium, were closed off for repairs, many of these classes took place in the school cafeteria, such as this clinic where a professor gave an overview and demonstration of different regional charango styles to a small audience of students (Figure 3.4). Some musical groups consisting of faculty, students, and alumni offered free public concerts in the school on Friday evenings in order to raise public sympathies for their plight

and keep the school community active. In practice, these concerts were far more successful at the latter than the former; the events were not well publicized outside of the school and the audiences mainly consisted of EMPA students.

Figure 3.4: Professor "Toro" Stafforini (L) accompanies a student in an ad hoc charango workshop during the period of suspended classes at EMPA

Meanwhile, the Centro de Estudiantes independently began planning its own series of actions to draw attention to the same cause, including weekly *cortes* of Avenida Belgrano in front of the school. The street is one of the main southward thoroughfares from the capital city, just a few blocks from the Puente Pueyrredón, and these *cortes* represented a significant inconvenience to a large population of commuters. The students attempted to simultaneously cause a highly visible public nuisance but also generate goodwill for their

cause, a difficult proposition. They distributed leaflets during all of these public events outlining their complaints and demands, and during several *cortes* bands made up of current and former students played in the middle of the blocked street, a physical and sonic performance of music students displaced by the lack of adequate space.

By the middle of April, after several meetings between representatives of the faculty and the Director of Artistic Education for the province, it appeared that a potential solution had been brokered: the province had designated 90,000 pesos (approximately $30,000) for reparations to the building on Avenida Belgrano, and promised to rent a single additional annex until a single, new building outfitted with a wide array of amenities from a MIDI and recording studio, large classrooms and performance spaces, could be finished on the still empty plot of land the province had set aside thee years before. When this news was reported during a general student assembly, I was at first confused by the lukewarm response it received. In fact, the student body voted to continue with their weekly protests in spite of this news, until the physical space had been provided and classes could begin. "It's not the first time La Plata [the seat of the provincial government] has promised us something like this," one student explained.

The last protracted struggle between the Centro de Estudiantes and the province had, in fact, involved a number of such plans to provide a new space that had not ultimately come to fruition. The Centro had undertaken an occupation of the school at its old site in 2000 that had lasted for several months, sleeping in the school's library and preventing classes from taking place as part of a public protest demanding a larger and more permanent building for the EMPA. The occupation had ended in September of that year with an agreement, co-signed by the Sub-secretary of Education for the province and the Director

General of artistic education, to purchase the plot of land adjacent to the school and construct a permanent and larger home for the EMPA there during the 2001 school year. A year later, the land remained unclaimed and no construction had been undertaken, and in November of 2001 the same Director General authorized the purchase of the neighboring building, although several months later, according to the EMPA's official institutional history, "due to a political decision by the General Administration of Culture and Education, it was decided not to acquire this property." (http://empa.edu.ar/historia%20institucional.htm). The Centro undertook several other occupations of the space before, as a provisional measure, the province rented the space on Avenida Belgrano at the end of 2002. Many students – and no small number of teachers – explained to me that they believed that it was only through extended, public protest that the authorities had been held accountable for their promises, and that the latest round of proposed actions by the government were, while a positive step, not in themselves credible until they produced concrete results.

The provincial authorities began to respond to these increasingly public demonstrations through more public means as well; a mid-April official press release is notable in that it not only claims that the students' and teachers' demands had already been met but that secretary Mardones relies on rhetorical strategies very similar to her antagonists from the EMPA, appealing to the democratic ideals of a free education and insinuating that it is the teachers who are failing to comply with the constitutional mandate:

> The General Administration of Culture and Education reiterates that, just as Governor Felipe Solá announced, the Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda (EMPA) will have a new building that will be completed in 30 months, and that, while the construction of the establishment is being carried out, the Escuela [has] received a subsidy of 90 thousand pesos to repair the

> building where they currently function. At the same time, and in order to address the totality of the educational community's demands, [the province] is about to finalize the renting of a new space that will function as an annex to the educational institution.
>
> Faced with the repeated street *cortes* by the students of the EMPA for demands that have already been responded to, the Director of Artistic Education indicated that "it is interesting that, despite having responded to all of the demands and worries made known by the students and faculty of the Escuela de Música, the response that we've received has been that they will not teach classes and that streets will be cut off making demands that have already received a solution."
>
> "It would seem that behind the demands there must be some other kind of intent, because the right to study is guaranteed by the General Administration of Culture and Education that made available the repairs to the building where the Escuela functions, the temporary use of other educational spaces in the area and the rental of an annex," added [Director] Mardones (Dirección General de Cultura y Educación).

Ultimately, the single annex that Ms. Mardones referred to was made available to the EMPA – a set of rented rooms above a bank approximately ten blocks from the Belgrano building. The school had appointed a group of professors to ensure that the space would be appropriately equipped for music classes. At the end of my fieldwork period, in July of 2007, these negotiations were still underway and several classrooms lacked heat, electricity and blackboards. The academic year, scheduled to start in the last week of March, finally began the week of September 17th. The provincial government's claims of a 30-month period until the completion of the new building seem more suspect; when I returned to Avellaneda for a visit in August of 2008, 16 months after the press release quoted above, there was not yet any visible progress of construction at the site. In June of 2009, according to a blog run by the Centro de Estudiantes, a large sign was erected on the plot announcing it as the future site for a public plaza (http://ceempa.awardspace.com/blog/index.php).

The Machine for Not Making Pancakes

I believe that one of the main difficulties contributing to the instabilities and dysfunction within the system of political authority, both within the school itself and between the school and the provincial interests, is the gap between the ideal of democratic government and the perception that the current system is dysfunctional. That is, students, faculty, and the provincial authorities alike all appeal rhetorically to democratic ideals – that public education should be free and equally accessible to all citizens; that public officials ought to act in the public interest and government should be open and accessible for example – while simultaneously operating in a way that belies their lack of faith in the system in practice.

Given the disjuncture between the government's past promises of space and funding, and the failure of those promises to materialize, I believe that there is an understandable and serious credibility gap that undermines the legitimacy of the system of political authority in the eyes of many of the school's students and faculty. The system of political authority has an internal logic, a set of visible bureaucratic processes and discourses that ultimately do not effect the changes that they promise. Javier Cohen was fond of ironically describing the bureaucratic mechanisms of the school and the provincial administration as a "machine for not making pancakes." I think the metaphor is a useful and apt one: a Rube Goldberg-esque tangle of busily working machinery that produces all of the evidence of a functioning bureaucracy except an end result. Members of the EMPA community navigate regulations, processes, official titles and declarations, which in turn inspire counter-measures, petitions, demonstrations, and invective, all carried out in the most

visible and public manner possible, yet they are often maddeningly ineffectual at resolving the practical difficulties of teaching or learning music. Meanwhile, frustrated by their perceptions of a state apparatus concerned only with maintaining the personal and even kleptocratic ties of a clientelist system, students (and to a lesser degree teachers) have come to institutionalize their own form of anti-institutionalism. Conflict is not a diversion from routine politics, but rather an integral part of the routine politics system. The Centro de Estudiantes, for example, over the course of several plenary session assemblies, democratically ratified a set of seven guiding principles, among which is their belief that "CEEMPA's experience demonstrates that things are won by fighting [for them] and that fight is generated, principally by going out into the street." (http://ceempa.awardspace.com/blog/seccion.php?id_seccion=9) Meanwhile at the provincial level the clientelist, machine politics system and a long history of institutional weakness have led to a ministry of education (and other governmental departments) populated by bureaucrats more interested in using their position as a stepping stone to a more powerful one than long tenure in the department. As a result, these provincial-level authorities frequently seem less interested in proactively solving problems that would prevent popular uprisings than in benefiting from the symbolic and political capital of publicly controlling or discrediting them once they happen.

Within the school, the disjuncture between the system of political authority and the system of cultural authority only serves to entrench the feelings of alienation and mistrust that many students and teachers expressed toward the provincial authorities. There was a consensus among both teachers and students that the period of my field research at EMPA was among the most tumultuous in the school's history. But even the teachers who had

been with the school since the outset also agreed that it was a difference of degree, rather than a categorically different experience, that we were living through together. "We're in a rather chaotic moment," Fernando Diéguez, the cello teacher in the tango program, told me after a class I had observed early in my field work period. "But really, it's good that you see all this," he continued, gesturing at a CD player that had failed to work during his class, and at some of the posters on the walls announcing an upcoming march. "Really, what defines us is chaos" (Diéguez, 2006 p.c.).

Falla: Political authority as facilitator

I met Marta Sima at a presentation on indigenous music by an Argentine ethnomusicologist at a cultural center in downtown Buenos Aires in the austral spring of 2006. After I explained the purpose of my field work (at that time, focused solely on the EMPA) she had invited me to visit the Falla program. Several months later, with classes at the EMPA suspended indefinitely and most of the faculty deeply pessimistic about the possibility of the school reopening before my fieldwork period lapsed, I contacted her again about the possibility of broadening the scope of my research to include the Falla program. I set an appointment to meet her in late April at the Falla tango/folklore department's home on Perú street, just blocks from the Plaza de Mayo and the Casa Rosada, the presidential office, in the heart of downtown Buenos Aires. I was shown in to her second-floor office, where I found her, cigarette in hand (despite municipal ordinances forbidding smoking in government buildings) jokingly cajoling a man I would later learn was a professor of violin about paperwork he had failed to file. "Excuse me for being such a bother," she was saying,

"but I thought you might, at some point, like to get paid for your work here." He smilingly apologized for his tardiness, promised to bring the papers the next day, and excused himself.

The prospect of working for a long period of time at the Falla without pay, I later discovered, was not merely rhetorical bluster on Sima's part. In fact, many of the program's teachers, who do not hold music or teaching degrees, face a lengthy process of accreditation. Frequently, Sima acts as interlocutor between the teachers and the municipal educational system, which is poorly prepared to evaluate musicians' abilities and experiences. She explained that the majority of the teachers in the system receive their accreditation through a system designed as a contingency for cases where no candidates for the job have official degrees in the subject being taught. Since (up until very recently) no degrees existed in subjects such as arranging, tango violin, or charango, the positions can legally be filled by candidates who demonstrate their capability through "relevant prior experience." The difficulty with this process, Sima explained, lies in the lack of government officials versed enough in the forms of cultural capital that are necessary for the job to evaluate them. She remembered one such case:

> MS: For example, the Transcriptions course which Juan Quintero teaches, he applied . . . and began teaching Transcriptions and Popular Song. He presented all of his prior experience, [including] albums recorded by Juan Quintero, guitar and voice. And with that, he had relevant experience in Popular Song. But none of his papers said that he did transcriptions. They say, well, "work composed by…" or "arrangement by…" and therefore the Director of Human Resources for the city government didn't see in any of that material any prior experience that would suggest that this gentleman knew something about transcriptions…
>
> MO: And I suppose these guys don't understand the difference between arrangement, orchestration, transcriptions…
>
> MS: They don't have the slightest idea because they're not musicians! And because there isn't any mechanism, either, that would permit that, through a

> note, we could inform them why it is that someone with experience as an arranger could teach transcriptions… [We resolved it] with another teacher from the program who has a position in the national government, he commissioned [Quintero] to do a transcription that could be performed by other musicians, and then . . . approved, with his signature and his official stamp, a piece of paper that said "Transcription [by] Juan Quintero." And this meant that the teacher waited approximately a year before receiving his first salary for teaching this class.

In effect, Sima worked in this case as in many others not only as interlocutor but as a translator between the systems of cultural and political authority, taking steps to make sure that cultural capital that was perfectly valid in the former system was appropriately recognized by the latter. Her willingness to do so was doubtless one of the principal factors in shaping the much more harmonious relationship that the faculty from the Falla program had with the governmental body responsible for its oversight than their counterparts at EMPA.

But at least as important was the way that the system of political authority functioned within the school itself: school regulations, wherever possible, were designed or negotiated to be able to function in the service of the system of cultural authority. And since that system of cultural authority, as I will explore in the next chapter, valued not only musical competence but also (as an ideal, if not always in practice) egalitarian participation, the system of political authority too was designed to allow a far greater degree of participation and agency on the part of students and faculty.

Immediately following our brief first visit in her office, Marta offered to take me on a tour of the building. Like the EMPA, the Falla program existed in a building that had formerly been a multi-family housing space, with high ceilings in the classrooms and well-worn wood floors. She was humble, quick to apologetically point out some of the building's

shortcomings such as loose tiles or dark hallways, telling me about her first day in the job when she brought her own drill in from home to install a bolt lock on the faultily latching bathroom door, and lamenting that there were only four classrooms that were equipped with a piano, drum set and a whiteboard. Having just come from the EMPA, where there is only one such room and ten times the number of students, I found it hard to suppress a smile. Despite its age and obvious signs of wear, the building seemed neat and well cared for; in a small and dimly lit kitchen at the back of one floor a sharply worded sign reminded students not to leave used *mate* leaves lying about and explained that the hot water was provided "as a good for the whole community."

On the second floor of the building, in a small interior courtyard we met a handful of students smoking and drinking *mate* between classes. Marta greeted them each by name with a kiss on the cheek, introducing me as "an American ethnomusicologist who will be studying here." Gesturing at the courtyard, she explained that she had informed the first-year students that the space was "theirs," and had encouraged them to bring in plants to decorate it, but had thus far been unsuccessful. On the way back to her office, we passed by the main, narrow entrance hallway where the wall facing the stairs clearly functioned as a community bulletin board of sorts. Posters were neatly hung, advertising instruments for sale, music classes or upcoming performances of local jazz,[45] tango, or *folklore* artists (Figure 3.5). I remarked to Marta that, given my recent experiences at EMPA, the lack of any signs

[45] The Falla also had a jazz program, instituted at the same time as the folklore/tango program, which shared the same space but held its classes in the morning. Folklore/tango classes were held in the evening so there was little overlap between these two populations. Because I started observing at the Falla late in my fieldwork period, I decided to focus ethnographically only on the one program, and meanwhile continued to attend assemblies, protests and other activities at the EMPA in the mornings, not knowing whether or not regular class activities would resume there before my research period ended.

alluding to political activity of any kind seemed unusual. "Students here don't generally practice extra-musical politics," she replied.

Figure 3.5: The main corridor in the Falla building. All postings are music-related, as "students here don't generally practice extra-musical politics."

Curricular structures

Unlike the provincially mandated *plan de estudios* that EMPA developed in structural equivalence to the classical conservatories' curricula, the *plan de estudios* for the Falla tango/folklore degree was developed independently and without outside limitations by Marta Sima, Juan Falú, and the other faculty members. As a result, they were able to take into account the unique demands of *música popular*.

One of the key differences that distinguishes the Falla tango/folklore program is the equal emphasis that it places on composition and performance. In the field of cultural

production of *música popular*, as I will explore in depth in Chapter 6, cultural competence includes not only technical competence on an instrument but also originality or uniqueness. To properly prepare students for careers as tango or *folklore* musicians, then, requires training them not only to be competent interpreters of others' music but creators of their own. Furthermore, as I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5, the poetics of *música popular* do not privilege the scriptural in the same way that classical music does; musicians use written notation as one of a number of mnemonic and descriptive strategies to help them realize desired performances or recordings but the written record itself is more a means than an end and is not imbued with the same sense of authority that classically trained musicians are taught to afford written scores.[46] Rather than a clear dividing line between creator and performer as distinct social roles, in the sphere of *música popular* most musicians play a variety of roles along a continuum between completely original creation and faithful reproduction of someone else's composition. Depending on the professional context, from day to day a professional popular musician might be expected to be able to perform a notated part exactly as written, to contribute an appropriate and idiomatic part for their own instrument in a collaboratively generated composition or arrangement, to write (or dictate orally) a complete or partial arrangement of a pre-existing tune for an ensemble, or to create and perform an entirely original composition.

In order to prepare the students for all of these roles, Sima and Falú created a curricular structure that introduces degrees of compositional or creative freedom

[46] For a discussion of the processes by which classical conservatory education teaches this reification of scriptural authority see (Kingsbury 1988, 87-94).

sequentially.[47] Over the course of the four-year program, students move through a sequence of classes that move from "Transcriptions" through "Variations," "Arrangements," and finally "Applied Composition." Marta Sima explained to me the difference between these terms, as they were understood in the curricular design:

> One of the priorities was that the program would bring students to develop their creative capacity. In production, in the writing of the students' own music. So we thought about a sequence in which in each stage the student had to put more of him/herself, of his/her own harvest.[48] In a transcription there is an effort on the student's part to turn over something that they're hearing in a trio version, and he has to transcribe, for example a guitar trio and he has to transcribe it for flute and piano. Then there is an elaboration that is, rather, the resolution of how to change, how to flip over the same musical ideas, melodic turns, counterpoints and harmonies into another format. In a version, there can appear things that can be different. In applied composition, one is working with freedom and in an arrangement the creativity lies more in the instrumentations or orchestrations than in the creation of melodies (Sima 2007, p.c.).

This macro-level design of curricular development in accordance with Falú's own understanding and prioritization of musical praxis is a prime example of how the political structures were designed in accordance with, and affording primacy to, the system of cultural authority. And while Falú's degree of personal autonomy and influence in shaping the program cannot be overstated, it is important to note as well that within individual courses, professors were also afforded a great degree of latitude to shape curricular content.

For example, Patricio Villarejo, the cello teacher in the program, was hired at the beginning of the 2007 academic year, and was still in the process of refining both the method and content of his group cello classes when I began to observe him. I asked him to recall what kind of guidelines he was given when he first started teaching there:

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[47] A complete annotated list of each program's curricular plan can be found in the Appendix.
[48] i.e. "*de su propia cosecha.*" Sima's choice of an agrarian metaphor for music making is in keeping with the idealized rural aspect of *folklore* as cultural practice that I will explore in depth in Chapter 4.

> MO: When you first came to the Falla, did they dictate anything about class content?
>
> PV: Well, when I arrived I said, "What do I have to do?" "Whatever you want," they said! "Sure, but is there a program?" "Yeah, there is a program but I don't know where it is," the director said. The program, the students passed it along to me, they had gotten it from a computer that somebody wasn't watching. They sat down and copied it out.
>
> MO: And is there a determined repertoire, specific pieces?
>
> PV: No, the only thing there is, I put it up on the blog so you can see it, it says "First year, Interpretation of works in keeping with first year [level], Improvisation, in keeping with first year [level], development of arrangements in keeping with first year…"

Villarejo was not complaining about this tautology; rather he understood it as a flexible structure that afforded him as instructor the freedom to vary the content in accordance with the particular interests and abilities of the students. It also provided some measure of protection against canon formation; rather than delineating a set of pieces that are the determination of musical competence (as is the case in the classical conservatory curriculum in Argentina) competence in tango/folklore is by design socially determined. While the teacher is the ultimate arbiter of what precisely "in keeping with first year" means in terms of playing ability, both Sima and Villarejo acknowledged that the current population of bowed string students were not as technically advanced as what they would ideally like the standard for entrance to the program, and that the current standards were to a certain extent a compromise.

In fact, student input in these decisions was also actively sought out; while Villarejo was actively preparing new arrangements of well-known tangos and *folklore* repertoire for students, he also frequently solicited their opinions about the course, and changed his own curriculum accordingly. When, for example, several students expressed frustration with

what they felt was an emphasis on complex multi-part cello ensemble arrangements (arrangements that were beyond the reach, technically, of a number of the students), rather than take offense Villarejo asked them how they would prefer to spend the class time and, following their suggestion, devoted the next class period to teaching guitar-derived *chacarera* strumming patterns and other approaches to developing a cello part from a set of chord symbols.

Ultimately, it seemed that many of the decisions about how the school was organized sprang from values and assumptions about how *música popular* should sound and how popular musicians ought to interact with one another rather than, as in the case of the EMPA, an ideology more concerned with "the popular" as a broad societal concept, and popular music as a consequence of that. For instance, where the EMPA's unlimited enrollment policy has led to a glut of guitarists and a scarcity of other instruments that are integral to Argentine *música popular* (such as the bandoneón or the violin), the Falla program limits the number of entrants to the program by instrument, ensuring a relatively balanced instrumentation in ensemble classes. This policy is not without drawbacks in terms of shaping the quality of musical performance, however. Like the EMPA, Falla enjoys a much higher number of applicants to the program on some instruments (guitar principally, but also piano) than on rarer or more expensive instruments such as bandoneón and the bowed strings. As a result, while the highly competitive nature of the vacancies for guitarists means the level of technical fluency is quite high among guitar students, Sima admitted that they relax standards somewhat for the less popular instruments in order to ensure balanced instrumentation. Ultimately, though, all the decisions from how many students to enroll, to what courses they must take and in what order, to how and on what material students will be

evaluated for competency stem from a set of aesthetic and ideological assumptions about the way *música popular* ought to be produced, ought to sound, and what it ought to mean.

The intra-school system of political authority functions entirely at the service of the system of cultural authority. In the instances where the political authority exterior to the tango/folklore program – whether in the conservatory as a whole or in the municipal government – is not interested in, or equipped to address this cultural authority, Marta Sima frequently acts as interlocutor and translator between these systems. Her willingness to do so, I believe, greatly contributes to the sense of harmony between students, faculty, and administration within her department.

Conclusions

It would be easy to reduce the comparison between these two programs to a tale of administration done well and administration gone awry. Indeed, I spoke with a number of students and professors who had come to that very conclusion, in some cases precipitating a transfer of institutions or, in at least one case, teaching concurrently at both but with dramatically different levels of job satisfaction. But I believe that to reduce the difficulties I encountered in the management of the EMPA to administrative incompetence, or malfunctioning bureaucracy, fails to entirely address the very different cultural and ideological roles these institutions have evolved.

Several of the teachers currently at the Falla program remarked that the school reminded them very much of how the EMPA had been in its first years: a small program, close and collegial relationships between teachers and students, and an informal but serious attention to creating music. And as I will explore in the next chapter, I believe that

ultimately the system of *cultural* authority in each of these schools is quite similar. They admire the same culture heroes; they have created similar historical narratives for their own roles as musicians imbricated in and often positioned against larger economic and political systems; they embrace similar musical aesthetics. But whether through design or through circumstance, the EMPA as an institution has not only grown but radically and collectively re-imagined itself as an institution that is fundamentally devoted to popular education in music, while the Falla remains a rather traditional music school devoted to education in popular music.

While Marta Sima claimed that students in the Falla program "do not practice extra-musical politics," I do not believe (nor do I think she does) that this means that these students understand themselves or their music to be free of political or ideological content or ramifications. Of course, the very notion that music could be free of such content is itself an ideological position, and it is one of the legacies of the conservatory culture that (fortunately, I think) the Falla program's creators have deliberately avoided. Along with musical training, Sima and Falú designed for the Falla a curriculum that includes academic classes in sociology and anthropology of music and a course entitled "The Ethics and Ontology of Art." As Sima told me, they believe it is important that students as musicians gain a consciousness of their role as subjects in a larger political and cultural field. But unlike at EMPA, whatever political activity students and teachers may be engaging in seems to remain separate from the daily business of studying and creating music.

I would imagine that some of the more politicized members of the EMPA community – those who have taken to heart Cantore's injunction to study music with a symbolic rifle on the table – might scoff at the notion of not practicing "extra-musical

politics." Such an approach also presupposes the possibility of extra-political musical practice, which for students for whom the entire schooling experience has been characterized by a consistent fight against perceived government neglect or corruption, would likely seem unrealistic at best.

Alternatively, I might suggest a somewhat more cynical reading of the de-politicized environment of the Falla. Rather than feeling that the system of political authority, as it exists extra-institutionally, already represents their interests and thus does not need to be opposed, it is possible that Falla students are not more politically active because they are *less* optimistic about the system's viability as a vehicle for change than the EMPA students. After all, the Falla tango/folklore program exists as a subsidiary of the classical conservatory, and its students are not well represented by the official democratic organisms (Centro de Estudiantes, Cooperadora) that function in that conservatory. Even Marta Sima, the highest intra-school representative of the system of political authority, has enough difficulty getting access to official funds that she has at times circumvented the system at personal cost, bringing in her own tools to make repairs or paying for school supplies out of pocket rather than waste time navigating the frustrating bureaucracy of the conservatory's regulations. The relative harmony of the Falla tango/folklore program could perhaps better be explained as a fortunate case of benign neglect by the system of political authority coupled with a personable administrator who was flexible in putting her own authority at the service of the informal school cultural system.

In the period following my field research there have been new developments that unfortunately suggest that this latter interpretation may be more accurate. In August 2008, I returned to Buenos Aires for a brief visit and found that the Tango/folklore program had

been relocated to share space in the central building of the municipal conservatory in the Almagro neighborhood. The Perú street building had been closed for repairs, and students and teachers alike lamented that some of the particularities of their program had been lost with their access to a space of their own. Central administrators from the conservatory had become more active in micro-managing the program, and none of the students or teachers I spoke with saw these changes as an improvement. "They call us '*los del Perú,*"[49] one student complained, "and we fight over space, rooms… you can't drink *mate* in the halls, you don't know everybody" (2008 p.c.). One teacher darkly joked that "we're like the Quilmes Indians. They've brought us in to control us," referring to one of the last indigenous groups left fighting against the colonial Spaniards who had been punished for their resistance by being relocated from the Andean northwest to a southern suburb of Buenos Aires that now bears their name.

In the following chapter I will explore the ways that the systems of cultural authority in these two schools function in the classroom through praxis. Through both discourse and musical performance, teachers perform idealized ways of being, generating intertwined musical aesthetics and ideology.

[49] Literally "The ones from Perú," the moniker of course directly refers to the name of the street from the tango/folklore department's former home. But the second meaning, alluding to the Andean cultural home of many of the styles of music these students are devoted to playing, and its clearly derogatory meaning, were lost on no one in this post-colonial context.

Chapter 4: Aesthetics and ideology in classroom discourse and practice

Having offered a structural analysis of these schools as formalized institutions embedded in larger political power structures, I wish now to move into an analysis of the programs as dynamic sites where individuals engage with and construct ideology and musical aesthetics on a daily basis. In doing so I am ultimately interested in how the process of institutionalization affects the way that *música popular* sounds, and what *música popular* means. While formalized aspects of these institutional cultures, such as curricular content, administrative oversight, and faculty makeup clearly affect these factors, my ethnographic field experience convinced me that the informal, spontaneous, discursive and musical performances in and out of the classroom were at least as essential to answering these questions. This chapter is an exploration of the ways that discourse and musical performance socially construct and enforce boundaries – genre boundaries as well as social boundaries. I bracket musical aesthetics and social ethics and ideology because I believe that, for institutions dedicated to helping students understand their own subject positions as creators of *música popular*, these two aspects are inextricably linked. What kind of music one chooses to perform, and how it sounds, necessarily has repercussions that are not merely aesthetic: what kind of public one can engage, what venues and media are accessible, what political or other extramusical meanings and uses will be associated with it, and of course what kind, and how much, monetary gain can be made from such activity.

While I only rarely observed a teacher at either of these schools offer definitive, prescriptive instructions to students about what was appropriate and inappropriate (aesthetically or ethically), I found that value judgments that made implicit connections

between "good" *música popular* and appropriate ways of being a socially situated popular musician and citizen were quite common. Simon Frith, borrowing terminology from Frank Kogan, has lamented the sharp division between the "discourse of the classroom," where aesthetic judgments were absent and subject matter is presented 'objectively,' and the "discourse of the hallway," where subjective personal opinions about the subject matter are permitted (Frith 1996, 12). Without a doubt, no such separation holds in these *música popular* schools, not least because the inclination to extend the 'classroom' to include informal music-making and social experiences (the two are never entirely separate) after school hours makes the very distinction between 'classroom' and 'hallway' itself problematic. But furthermore, I would be surprised to find a teacher in either of these programs who would espouse the idea that teachers should avoid sharing their own subjective aesthetic judgments with students. Indeed, it is a fundamental part of their training.

This is not to say that students are merely socialized into absorbing and replicating their superiors' opinions about 'good' and 'bad' music. In fact, one of the most interesting and compelling aspects of the system of cultural authority at these schools is the way that it ultimately prepares students to innovate in ways that may diverge from, or even directly contravene the aesthetic principles of their teachers. This is contingent upon a base level of competency, and must be earned, but nonetheless I believe it marks one important way in which the music cultures within these schools diverge from those in the classical conservatories from which they were derived.

Up to this point, I have largely treated *música popular* in these schools as a monolithic concept. It is not; important social as well as sonic differences separate the genres of jazz, tango, and *folklore* even within the relatively small social space of a single school.

Nonetheless, I do believe that they share some underlying ideological assumptions which I will address first by exploring the socially constructed boundaries around "*música popular*" as a discursive category. I will then turn to the musical, historical, and aesthetic particularities of each of the three genres in turn. Particularly the two genres that are associated with local and national identities – tango and folklore – are couched in separate historical and semiotic imaginaries, which merit separate analysis. Of course, the close conviviality, both in terms of physical space and of ideology, among the three genres within these schools has led to a certain degree of stylistic influence and intertextuality. After examining the specific ideological and aesthetic differences between these three genres, I will turn to the ways in which they have converged in these schools' more general conceptions of *música popular*. In particular, I will discuss their similar tendencies in harmonic practice, where the influence of jazz is evident across genres, in their tendency to privilege orality and aurality over scripturality, and the blurring of the boundaries between composition, improvisation, and performance as practices and as separate social roles. Finally, I will conclude by examining the ways that these musical aesthetics are constructed within a relatively egalitarian and informal system of cultural authority that exists in precarious tension with the system of political authority described previously.

Discursive constructions of "*música popular*"

In one of my first visits to the Falla program, I arrived early to the room where most of the class had yet to arrive. To pass the time, I chatted idly with Ursula, a pianist in her third year in the program about her own musical interests.

"And what about the *música popular* from there [i.e. the U.S.]," she asked me, changing the subject. "It's all jazz, right?" I replied that I thought that jazz, much like tango in Argentina, had long since passed out of mass popularity, but that there remained a smaller subculture that continued to perform and listen to it. "But there are various kinds of *folklore* there, too," I continued, mentioning and explaining the first few genres to come to mind (since neither her classmates nor the teacher had yet arrived): bluegrass, polka, and *conjunto*.

It was not until later that I realized that both her question and my answer bracketed a large and obvious body of popular music that would have been well-known to both of us: rock and pop. U.S.-based pop music is as omnipresent in Buenos Aires' urban spaces as are its Spanish-language equivalents, and yet it never occurred to either of us that such music would be included in a catalog of local *música popular*. This absence points to a fundamental difference between "popular music" as it is understood by English language scholars and "*música popular"* as it is constructed discursively as a discipline of performance study in the local context. English scholars of popular music generally stress mass-mediation as the defining characteristic of their disciplinary subject, or occasionally define it oppositionally as distinct from "art" and "folk" music (Manuel 1988). My interlocutors in these schools, by way of contrast generally understood "*música popular*" to include "folk" and *some* mass-mediated musics, but to exclude the category of "*música comercial"* – discursively, a category of music that they understood to have been "*hecha para vender*" (made to sell) rather than created principally for aesthetic, ideological, or other purposes.

These classifications are, of course, heavily value-laden and I wish to explore the ways that "*música popular"* as an endodiscursive concept works to define and discipline the ideology and aesthetics of the music that EMPA and Falla students and teachers create and

consume. I do not wish to reify the categories of "*música culta*," "*música comercial*," and "*música popular*" as analytically distinct. Rather, I concur with Néstor García Canclini that such distinctions are increasingly blurred and context-dependent, particularly in the global South (García Canclini 1995, 5). But I do believe that these terms, and the policing of their boundaries, play an important role in conceptually and practically defining and shaping musical practice in these programs. And furthermore, I concur with Anthony Guest-Scott that musical genres, rather than rigid sets of strictly musical criteria, are somewhat contingent, socially constructed and maintained, and demonstrate a "bounded permeability" that makes them fruitful sites for articulating sociocultural values through musical practice (Guest-Scott 2008, 429). That is to say, I wish to emphasize the link between social values and musical aesthetics in the formation of *música popular* as a set of interrelated musical genres. Like Fabian Holt, I believe this is most productively approached not through constructing a master theory, but rather a series of "small theories" attending to the specific relationships between the sonic ideals and social ideals in their cultural context (Holt 2007, 8).

Franco Fabbri was one of the first popular music scholars to offer a theory of genre based on idealized assumptions about behavior (musical and extra-musical) rather than strictly sonic characteristics, describing genre as "a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules" (Fabbri 1982, 52). I believe that fundamentally, the arguments that the participants in these schools construct about how this music should sound cannot be meaningfully separated from their implicit and explicit assumptions about how musicians should act, why and for whom they should be

writing and performing music in the first place, and other ethical and ideological considerations.

What is excluded: "commercial" music

The exclusion of rock, pop, and cumbia – genres that all enjoy much greater prevalence and popularity in the contemporary Buenos Aires marketplace and urban soundscape – from the *música popular* school curriculum is a decision that various teachers and administrators at the two schools framed in different ways. For Marta Sima, the pedagogical adviser to the Falla tango and folklore program, it was not so much a question of excluding these genres from the category of *música popular* as such – rather, she explained that the decision to avoid the label of *música popular* for their program came partially as a result of a desire to avoid these genres:

> MS: There was a rather long period of thinking, rethinking, discussing . . . what was going to be the name of this degree program. It was clear that it was going to be a program that was going to be driven by [Juan] Falú. A degree program in *música popular*. And from there, there arose some issues . . . about what is the reach of those concepts: What is 'the popular?' It is only that which is opposed to the non-popular, so therefore we have to teach *cumbia villera.*[50] Then, the various names that we went through, since we are an academic institution, what we were looking for was what sort of misunderstandings they could give the place. We thought about a degree in "Argentine music," but somebody could have understood that they'd have to study. . . [pause]
>
> MO: Guastavino?

[50] *Cumbia villera*, "shantytown cumbia," is a genre of music that became popular especially among the lower classes in the late 1990s. Often relying on very simple melodies and arrangements, synthesized keyboards and drum machines, *cumbia villera* is frequently the target of scorn by middle-class cultural critics on both the right and the left. It is held in low esteem not only for its relative musical simplicity, but more importantly for lyrics that are typically obscene, misogynist and glorify violence, crime and drug use. See e.g (Míguez 2006; Vila and Semán 2006).

> MS: Of course. I was going to say Alberto Williams.[51]
>
> MO: Him too.
>
> MS: So, if it was "Argentine music," well, it wouldn't exclude the academic; if it was *música popular*, it included manifestations that didn't interest us, that it was not our political and cultural project to transmit and recreate. So then, what name to give to a place for these manifestations that are transmitted and created collectively, in our country: "Tango and folklore," [calling] things by their name (Sima 2007, p.c.).

Although the explicit definition Sima offered for "the popular" as anything that is not non-popular was strictly tautological, she did allude to several ideological precepts in her explanation of the Falla program's development process that suggest a more specific understanding of "the popular" as it applies to music. Their understanding of popular music as a collectively produced and transmitted art form, for example, underlies much of the cooperative and collaborative ethos between students and faculty. Effectively, by avoiding the *música popular* term for the program, they have elected to remain agnostic on the question of whether mass / "commercial" musics belong within that category, stressing only that the "academic" (a term with slightly derogatory connotations for "art music") is definitively non-popular. But whether or not rock and cumbia belong in the category, Sima is clear that they are deliberately excluded for "political [and] cultural" reasons.

At the EMPA, I was not able to reach several of the original developers of the curriculum (I did interview Rodolfo Mederos, the founding head of the tango program, but several others either did not return requests for interviews or suffered from serious health problems that kept me from contacting them) but among current faculty I encountered a

[51] Carlos Guastavino (1912-2000) and Alberto Williams (1862-1952) are two of the best-known Argentine art music composers of their era.

wide array of attitudes regarding the absence of rock in the program, despite its obvious popularity among students.

Perhaps because of the dependence on electric instruments and drum sets, and the shared musical language of the blues, the jazz department seemed to attract the largest population of rock-oriented students, and jazz teachers seemed more inclined to express frustration to me about this than faculty from the other departments. One jazz guitar teacher explained that he believed that teaching rock in the school "would bring down the level" of the music the school taught, as he felt that jazz, tango and *folklore* were more musically sophisticated expressions deserving of more dedicated study. A drum set teacher had an attitude that was more resigned to rock, if not accepting of it as equally valid: "I wish they would just open up a rock program once and for all," he told me between classes, "so the kids who want to play rock can do that, and we can do our thing."

In any case, rock's absence in the formal curriculum at EMPA hardly kept students from maintaining an interest in it. Posters lining the school walls frequently advertised rock, blues, reggae and funk bands performing or seeking new members, and many such student-led bands sold their CDs or performed for school-related events such as the Centro de Estudiantes-led protests and concerts. Even student-led tango and *folklore* groups associated with the EMPA program (including La Biyuya and Zamacuco, discussed at length in Chapter 5) openly acknowledged the rock influence in their music, an important difference from the groups associated with the Falla program. Perhaps this difference can be attributed to the fact that, *pace* some misgivings of the sort detailed above, EMPA teachers did not, in my experience, ever attempt to disabuse students of their interest in (or desire to play) rock music. Rather, they saw it as a point of entry into the school, at which point, through

exposure to "native" musical styles that are far less prevalent in the larger culture, many students ended up developing an interest in these musical styles. Rodolfo Mederos, who directed the tango *orquesta* at the school for many years, remembers that this ensemble was the grounds for many such gradual musical acculturations:

> Lots of young rock musicians that were going around with their long hair and their guitars dragging on the ground would see me in the classes where I had that group of [tango] students . . . and they'd stay there watching, and the next day they'd open the door a little bit and listen, and after that they'd ask me for permission to come in, and after that they'd come closer and sit there, and the next year they'd have signed up for the tango program, and now they're *tangueros* (Mederos, p.c. 2003).

Mederos' *orquesta,* particularly during the mid-1990s served as an important nexus for a new generation of tango musicians who met like-minded peers. The graduates of this group were instrumental in shaping what has become an important new youth subculture of *orquestas típicas* using traditional tango orchestration and musical style strongly influenced by Osvaldo Pugliese coupled with social practices more allied with the youth rock and punk culture (Liska 2005, 54).

Similarly, an interest in cumbia – although students were quick to point out that they were strictly interested in the "authentic" or "folkloric" cumbia from Colombia and not the "cheap," "commercial" Argentine variety – enjoyed something of a vogue among EMPA students during my fieldwork period. Several extracurricular student groups had formed through connections they made in the school to Colombian musicians who played *gaita* and maracas and taught their Argentine classmates traditional repertoire of *porros* and other sub-genres of Colombian cumbia. Some of these students even incorporated this study into their curricular work, such as one group I observed who used a performance and demonstration

of *gaita* technique for a project in their Music of Latin America course (for which their teacher, "Toro" Stafforini, praised them enthusiastically). There was a broader interest in pan-Latin American folk and popular music styles in general among EMPA students than among their counterparts in the Falla program, an interest that many of these students attributed to this two-semester required course sequence and Stafforini's encouragement that they broaden their musical and cultural horizons beyond Argentine music. Stafforini himself was also an accomplished performer on charango, guitar, and a number of other Latin American stringed instruments and had enjoyed a lengthy career performing in Pan-Latin American and *nueva canción*-style bands (Stafforini, p.c. 2007).

What is excluded: European classical music?

One clearly agreed upon distinction in the local discursive construction of *música popular* was its mutual exclusivity from *música culta* or *música académica* ("learned" or "academic" music, the two most commonly used equivalents to the English "art music," the latter slightly derogatory, suggesting a studied, and maybe even formulaic, level of erudition at the expense of experimentation). Given these institutions' historical trajectories as alternatives or supplements to more established *música culta* counterparts in the state conservatory system, their insistence upon distancing themselves primarily from this repertoire and its surrounding musical culture is hardly surprising. But in practice, this distinction hardly signified a complete break from either this repertoire or the set of ideological assumptions that underpin the conservatory education model. Falla students, of course, were required to demonstrate proficiency and knowledge of European classical

music equivalent to a *Ciclo Básico* degree in order to gain entrance to the program.[52] But I regularly witnessed teachers in both schools drawing from classical repertoire ranging from two-part Bach inventions in bandoneón classes to Couperin harpsichord suites adapted for the charango. I never heard a teacher or student at either school express an opinion about European classical music's unfavorability for study. Rather, they most frequently saw it as an excellent tool to use in order to develop technical facility and stylistic flexibility that they could then apply toward the music that more directly interested and represented them.

This pragmatic attitude also led teachers at both schools to use the European classical repertoire in new ways that contrast sharply with the nearly fetishistic sense of the score as the ultimate authority in most conservatory-style teaching (see, e.g. Kingsbury 1988: 92-93). The bandoneón professor who assigned the two-part Bach invention, for example, suggested that the student playing it omit a whole-note trill in the left hand at one point, substituting an octave doubling of the right hand melody. "It's more *tanguero* this way," he explained, alluding to tango musicians' frequent technique of doubling of a melody at one or two octaves of separation, or *canto y bajo* (Salgán 2001, 99). Similarly, students in the "*Versiones"* course at the Falla were assigned, as an exercise in understanding the idiomatic rhythmic and formal structures of the *cueca cuyana,* a folk dance from Mendoza province, the task of arranging the C minor Prelude from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* as a *cueca.*

While teachers and students of *música popular* seemed to agree about the importance of distinguishing their own field of production from that of European art music, this

[52] The entrance audition requirements were under revision during my period of study, and have since changed to allow students to perform *popular* pieces rather than, or in addition to, classical repertoire. At the time of my field study, however, all Falla students had been required to perform classical pieces (and demonstrate aural skills and counterpoint) in order to gain admittance to the program.

distinction hardly entailed a rejection of the latter as a valid field of study. Perhaps the most striking statement of the affinity between the two came from Rodolfo Mederos, the bandoneonist and composer who had been one of the most important founders of the EMPA tango program. I interviewed him in his home studio, where we sat at a table next to a poster diagramming "the tree of music" – a schematic demonstrating the historical development of European art music as an organic *telos* where each era naturally begat the next. For Mederos, tango music, despite its humble and postcolonial sociocultural origins, belongs solidly within this European tradition.

> I believe that if Brahms had lived in Buenos Aires, he would have played tangos. If Mahler had lived here he would have done tango. I have no doubt. I believe that if Bach had lived here, he would have played bandoneon, he would have been a bandoneonist with his *orquesta típica,* I´m sure of it. Tango was born later, O.K., fine. But in this tree of classical music [pointing to diagram on the wall] tango is born out of this: Baroque, Classical, Romantic (Mederos p.c. 2003).

This raises an interesting question about the extent to which *música popular* truly occupies a counter-hegemonic cultural space. Bringing tango and other popular musics within the institutional space of the European classical conservatory may work against the notions of a Eurocentric canon – or on the other hand it may do very little to challenge those assumptions, and merely construct a narrow annex to that canon for a carefully disciplined set of "alternative" works.

Towards an ethics of *música popular*

While there was a significant level of disparity between teachers' opinions about the relative merits of specific popular (in the mass-mediated sense) artists and genres of music, they shared a set of underlying assumptions about the link between musical aesthetics and

social ethics, where commercial motivation was anathema to both artistic and ideological value. Many of these assumptions replicate Adornian constructions of the divide between "serious music" on one hand and "popular music" on the other, where the latter is characterized by mechanized means of production, mass mediation and interpolation within the capitalist culture industry (Adorno 1941). What is perhaps confusing about this standpoint is that for many of my interlocutors at these schools, *música popular*, or at least the best *música popular*, belongs from an ethical standpoint in the category of "serious music." Patricio Villarejo, cello teacher at the Falla, explained to me his understanding of this divide, and the distinction between "the commercial" and "the good":

> When I was young, here, society was very divided between people that listened to progressive music, as it was called at that time and people that listened to music for pleasure (*música complaciente*). Progressive music and music for pleasure, over time, was forgotten and now it's all the same. It's the same [to be] a guy who strives to make good, interesting, un-obvious music and [to be] a guy that makes music with two chords that he composed in his bathroom, I guess… with the pure intention to sell it and nothing else. And it doesn't seem like a bad thing that there is music of this level, for dancing, for parties, it's okay. There should be, there has to be, there always has been… But I have noticed that there is a permanent effort from above, through politics, to accomplish this. To bring our culture down, to liberate downward. Instead of liberating upward. So, all that noxious, obvious music of a low level becomes the music that people should listen to, the music accepted by the culture… And how can we have come to this, where there's no discrimination,[53] where everything is the same? But it's the state's task, precisely, to go along lowering, always downward. Because it's always convenient for them [to have] people not think! Or that they think, that they get together as little as possible. Then, it's up to the intellectuals and the artists to permanently fight against that…to have a little bit of discrimination, to be able to say this one is done commercially, [but] this one is done well (Villarejo, p.c. 2007).

[53] "*donde no se discrimina nada,"* contextually, lamenting the lack of aesthetic discernment rather than social inequality.

The connection that Villarejo sees between mass-produced music (only) for pleasure and the political and economic interests of the ruling class is one that Adorno recognized in the commercial music[54] of his time. For Adorno, the limited pleasure that popular music provided from the demands of the proletarian labor cycle, fully entrenched in hegemonic capitalist ideology, could only constitute a "perpetual busman's holiday" (Adorno 1941, 38). But Adorno saw mass-mediation and the "pseudo-individualism" (ibid., 25) of popular song forms as inherently empty of counter-hegemonic potential.

Villarejo's emphasis that the distinction was not between "high" and "low" art, but rather "progressive" and "for pleasure," suggests that while he (like many of the faculty at both schools) shares Adorno's mistrust of the capitalist culture industry, they would likely disagree about the contents of each category. The term "progressive music" from "when [he] was young" (i.e. the 1970s) was used at the time to refer not, or not only, to jazz-influenced and experimental *folklore*, but also to rock music from Argentina and abroad (Vila 1989, 10; Grinberg 2008, 26). In fact, Villarejo, like many of the professors at these schools of his generation, told me that among his first substantive musical influences were imported "prog rock" albums by bands such as Yes, Genesis, and Emerson, Lake and Palmer (Villarejo 2007, p.c.).

There is a dialectic tension between an ethics that is suspicious of commercialism and mass mediation and an emerging canon of important figures and pieces that almost entirely emerged from within the capitalist culture industry (although admittedly, frequently its outer fringes), and a faculty whose extracurricular professional success is often dependent

[54] While Adorno used the term "popular music" for this category, since for my interlocutors its equivalent in Spanish emphatically includes popular music that lies in direct opposition to this ideological position, I will use the term "commercial music" instead.

upon it that frequently surfaces in classroom discourse. Most of the students of these *música popular* programs aspire toward careers as performing and recording musicians, just as nearly all of the faculty in both programs supplement their teaching with work as professional musicians themselves. It is not outright rejection of the capitalist culture industry that teachers in these schools advocate, but rather a wary and constantly self-conscious engagement with the mechanisms of mass culture. Music for the sake of profit is anti-popular, but profiting from popular music is not.

For many of the students and teachers that I asked to define *música popular*, they understood it as a kind of third cultural space that was neither high culture nor pandering to the masses; they claimed that it was (or ought to be) accessible and understandable to common (Argentine) people, despite their reliance on processes of musical production that were more oftentimes more elaborate than those of their counterparts in rock and pop music. As one EMPA student in an emerging professional tango band explained,

> We're kids from the neighborhood (*pibes de barrio*), so okay, we're going to talk like that. We're neither really *académicos* nor really *populares*, or..not *populares,* not really …improvised, let's say. Like okay, we've got schooling, and the reality is that we've got schooling and the music's going to have a [written] arrangement because we studied for that, you know? We're going to want to put in what we've learned because it's part of us. But at the same time we don't want to let loose some extravagant thing that doesn't speak to the people. Because definitively, what you want is to speak to the other person. If he doesn't understand you, there's no sense in it (Baigorria 2004, p.c.).

This need for their music to "speak to the people," to conceive of an ideal audience comprising the local, non-elite (*pibes de barrio*) classes – and unlike many local rock bands, an audience that included older generations as well as the young – was common among the student-led groups from both schools. But at the same time, and creating a certain amount

of tension, many of these groups also had idealized forms of listening and audience behavior that were far more in line with – although not exclusive to – the art music world: they often embrace musical aesthetics and pursue performances in venues that are conducive to quiet, attentive listening rather than dancing or active audience participation, create musical arrangements and performance styles that depend on subtle variations, the use of silence, and employ complex texts with literary or sociopolitical content. Diego Fischermann, an Argentine music critic who frequently writes about jazz, tango and *folklore* (including many reviews of performances and recordings by faculty at these schools) has even suggested that this phenomenon is common enough to render problematic the traditional "popular" and "art" music divide. Instead, he proposes the category of "artistic music from a popular tradition" as more apt to describe these genres of music meant for careful attentive listening rather than functional, dancing, entertainment or background contexts (Fischermann 2004, 32). While I do not find Fischermann's term itself useful, his observations do indicate the extent to which "popular traditions" can engender social spaces for music that replicate bourgeois assumptions about music and aesthetics – in essence, a kind of "popular music for art's sake."

Consolidation of genres: tango

In the years since the political and economic crisis of 2001-2002, there has been a resurgence of interest in tango among young Argentines and *porteños* in particular. By late 2004, the EMPA reported that enrollment in the tango and folklore programs had risen by 40% (Liska 2004, 46). Other institutions and organizations, formal and informal, have also arisen in what has become constituted as a youth subculture around performing, dancing,

and listening to tango. Primarily centered on cooperatively organized *orquestas típicas,* and drawing musical and social influence mainly from leftist bandleader Osvaldo Pugliese (1905-1995), one of the most important of these collectives calls itself "La máquina tanguera," ("the tango machine") and consists largely of *orquestas* of musicians ranging in age from late teens to early thirties. The founders of this movement met in the ensemble classes of Rodolfo Mederos at EMPA during the late 1990s (Liska 2005) and one of its most influential members, composer and pianist Julián Peralta, has returned to the EMPA as a professor in the tango department.

But while approximately the last decade has been marked by an increasing interest in tango, and even the consolidation of a new generational identity for young tango musicians, it is important to state that for many of these musicians (within and external to the EMPA) this identity is a self-consciously constructed and re-historicized one (Luker 2007; O'Brien 2005). For while tango remains a musical sign indexical with a local *porteño* identity, its popularity and relevance among contemporary audiences had waned by the end of the 1940s, and for most of these programs' students was, at least when they began their studies, a music they more closely associated with their grandparents' generation or with tourist shows than with their own personal experience. The turn toward tango was, for many of these young musicians, a deliberate turn away from the rock music that they had listened to and played growing up, and an attempt to forge a new localized identity in part as a response to what they saw as the homogenizing and alienating influence of globalization and the "first world" culture industry. As tango pianist and EMPA graduate Sonia Possetti (who has since returned to the school as a faculty member) announced from the stage during a local concert in July 2004, "our tango is what we do so that they can't invade us."

But while many students and teachers in the tango program expressed the importance of locality in their decision to pursue tango rather than another genre of music, they also acknowledged the (re)constructed nature of this local musical identity. Because of the generational gap in which most Argentines who grew up in the 1960s through the mid-1980s were more attuned to folklore and rock while tango fell out of fashion,[55] many of the EMPA and Falla students I interviewed grew up in houses where no one listened to tango. So their process of discovering and identifying with tango often began at EMPA, where compulsory introductory "appreciation" classes assured that all students would have at least a basic grounding in the main composers and performers, and basic history of all three genres before they would be required to choose a specialization.

One commonality that many of the students who ultimately chose tango as their specialization shared was their attraction to the lyrical content of tango. I found this to be equally true whether those students were instrumentalists or vocalists. Natacha, a bassist and graduate of the tango program, was typical in the way she remembered her interest in the genre developing:

> At first it sounded weird to me, like the sonority of an *orquesta*, I said "what's this?" The bandoneon was a strange sound! And the first thing that hooked me was the lyrics… there was a cassette of [tango bandleader Juan] D'Arienzo that Pedro Echagüé sang on, and there were all these milongas, really *lunfardas,*[56] really life-of-crime stuff. About thieves and things, and …I liked that. I remember that I had learned one of these lyrics by heart, and I loved to sing it. I don't know, because of the *lunfardo*, like there were a bunch of words that maybe I didn't even know what they meant but I liked the sound of the words (Moguilner 2004, p.c.).

[55] See (Vila 1991) on the social processes by which tango fell from a hegemonic cultural position.
[56] *Lunfardo* is the local slang dialect that was originally most strongly associated with the world of crime. Reliance on *lunfardo* terminology as an index of both locality and authenticity has traditionally been a common trope among tango lyricists.

Paradoxically, though, as this student's fascination suggests, the same archaic language and poetic tropes of past times that make Golden Age tangos at first bewildering or unfamiliar to contemporary Argentine audiences may in fact contribute to their continued relevance. T*ango canción*, or sung tango, as a distinct literary and musical song genre first emerged with Pascual Contursi's 1917 lyric to "Mi noche triste," and has frequently been characterized as quintessentially nostalgic, fatalistic, and obsessed with a desire for the unattainable return to the past, with which it "lives in a close intimacy." (Franco Lao 1978, 9) Ramón Pelinski has argued that it is this "capacity for detemporalization" that makes tango continually relevant, claiming that tango "is contemporary because it is 'past'" (Pelinski 2000, 27).

That nostalgic sense of the past as a personal and intimately felt experience is also conveyed in the way that tango history, even as an academic discipline within the schools, is constructed and conveyed. At EMPA, many students spoke to me enthusiastically about the tango history classes taught by Aníbal Arias, who as a former member of Aníbal Troilo's quartet had personally known and played with many of the genre's greatest and best-known musicians, even though they acknowledged that these classes consisted mostly of "nothing but anecdotes" about Arias' own personal experiences. Younger teachers as well, passed along second- and third-hand accounts of the more amusing or telling exploits of great tango musicians of generations past. Although these stories were often related primarily for humorous effect, and lacked the scholarly rigor of the more "academic" versions of tango history, I believe that they do important cultural work in constructing and disciplining the sociocultural boundaries of the genre, and merit serious consideration. These anecdotes form an informal historical narrative that contrasts sharply with the canonical music history taught in these schools' European classical counterparts. Rather than a quasi-hagiographical

telos of distinct stylistic eras populated by lone, inspired geniuses, these anecdotes help to construct a history of a genre whose key figures are revered, but also human, flawed, and often mired in intra-personal conflict. As such, many of these stories can also be read as a sort of parable that presents idealized representations of aspects of an "authentic" *tango* identity:

> You know, [singer Roberto] Goyeneche, when [bandleader Horacio] Salgán discovered him, was working as a bus driver. He had been singing, but really didn't become popular for some time after that, with Troilo… he would work, driving the bus, the same nights he was singing with Salgán at el Viejo Almacén… he'd drive the bus to the club, sing his set, and then finish his route. (Diéguez 2006, Tango Appreciation class at EMPA)

> Did you hear about when Piazzolla started playing with Troilo? The old man was totally out of control, so his wife was watching over him carefully. Pichuco [a popular nickname for Troilo] took Piazzolla aside and said "kid, go order a whiskey." And Piazzolla [said] "but I don't want…" "Go order a whiskey!." So Piazzolla did, and set it in front of him, and when [Troilo's wife] Zita looks the other way, Pichuco grabs it and drinks it all at once (EMPA tango student 2006, recalling an anecdote told in his Tango History class).

> Oh, Rubén Juárez was the worst, he'd go on tour with a bunch of *merca* [cocaine] hidden in the bellows of his bandoneon. But he wouldn't take it through the airport himself; he'd make his wife take it (Falla bandoneon student 2007, p.c.)!

> When Juárez went to study with Troilo, the old man told him to bring a notebook. He asked "what kind, staff paper, maestro?" "No, just a regular notebook." So Juárez shows up for his lesson, and Pichuco tells him "Okay, write this down: '*San Juan y Boedo antiguo y todo el cielo…*'"[57] He dictated the whole poem, and said "There you go. That's everything you need to know." (EMPA tango student, recalling an anecdote told in a Tango History class)

Common threads emerge in many of these anecdotes: admired *tangueros* often show little respect for authorities, a penchant for bohemian excess, and display working-class *barrio*

[57] Troilo is citing the first line of the lyrics to the tango "Sur," one of his best-known compositions with lyrics by Homero Manzi.

roots, and a general macho bravura. For example, in the anecdotes above bandoneón player Aníbal Troilo is portrayed as canny enough to evade his wife's controlling gaze, and skeptical enough of his own status as a musical authority to encourage a young bandoneón player to defer only to the text. Important figures in this continually reconstructed and performed tango history are revered not only for their musical innovation, but for their idiosyncrasies.

Within the formal curriculum as well, tango history teachers at both schools also drew distinctions between tango musicians' commercial success or historical significance in terms of their mass popularity, and their importance to tango musicians themselves:

> I have to recognize that -- although I don't much care for his music myself, I think there were other musicians at the same time who were doing much more interesting things – [Francisco] Canaro was very popular in his time, he was something of a landmark (Bertero 2007, Tango Styles/History class).

> [Horacio] Salgán has been a figure of monumental importance to tango music, to tango musicians, I should say … even though his *orquesta* never had the popularity of some others. Dancers didn't like it, his arrangements were too sophisticated, he experimented too much (Diéguez 2006, Tango Appreciation class).

As a result, students come to understand that for the contemporary tango community, importance, social and artistic/aesthetic value is independent (if not always mutually exclusive) of commercial success and mainstream popularity. And furthermore, students ought to aspire to the former category rather than the latter. Rodolfo Mederos, the founder of the EMPA tango curriculum, put it in the starkest terms:

> [Those] musicians who play in order to eat, or for applause…and therefore it doesn't matter to them what they do, and if they have to play faster, they play faster, if they have to imitate a style, they imitate a style, and if they have to sit in a chair they sit down[58], and it doesn't matter to them because what's

[58] Mederos here may be referring especially to bandoneón players who take easy work in imitative, flashy tourist-oriented tango shows; Astor Piazzolla was the first bandoneonist to play standing up, which he saw as a radical "declaration of independence" (Azzi and Collier 2000, 54) from earlier practice. Mederos himself

> important is eating, or getting applause, they're outside of my analysis. I don't see them as musicians, I see them as opportunists. People that play an instrument and have just shown up there. True musicians, those who make their own music, while it may be a way to make a living, and it may be a way to get applause, those who make music because it's a spiritual and ideological necessity, they have to defend or represent their culture – those are who I mean (Mederos 2003, p.c.).

These different kinds of discursive performance, both inside and outside of classroom, serve to delineate a boundary between appropriate and inappropriate ways of being a *tanguero*. The disdain for musicians whose primary goal (or primary attainment) is popularity or commercial success, while echoed in the other departments, seems most strident among the tango musicians at these schools. Perhaps the reason for this is that tango musicians, more than jazz or *folklore* specialists, actually have far more real opportunities to convert their training in the genre into significant financial success. Playing in large, tourist-oriented tango shows where ticket prices in the range of 100 to 150 pesos (around thirty to fifty U.S. dollars) was always a more lucrative option for a well-trained tango music student than pursuing their own independent projects. Some senior students of these programs did take such work, but generally professed it to be musically boring work that they took only out of financial necessity, enabling them to pursue "real" musical projects on the side.

Consolidation of genres: folklore

As I discussed in Chapter 2, *folklore* in the context of the school of *música popular* is understood to be a musical genre dedicated to new musical creation based on old rural musical forms and practices, not merely the recreation of oral and pre-industrial musical

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played mainly standing up in his earlier years, where he collaborated with rock musicians and played in electrified ensembles such as Generación Cero. For the last decade he has mostly played sitting down, and pursues a more traditional aesthetic in his own arranging, composing and performing.

forms. In fact, the canon of composers and repertoire that both the Falla and EMPA *folklore* programs draw upon for their performance and *lenguaje* curricula consists mainly of music and musicians who came to prominence during or following the *folklore* boom of the 1960s. Principal figures appearing regularly in both schools' curricula include Atahualpa Yupanqui, Gustavo "Cuchi" Leguizamón, Rolando Valladares, the Abalos brothers, and Eduardo Falú. Given the EMPA jazz program's emphasis on the bop and pre-bop eras, and the tango program's central focus on repertoire from the "Golden Age" (ca. 1920s-1940s) this effectively means that, despite its potentially misleading name, *folklore* is the most contemporary of the three genres of *música popular* taught at these schools.

Adding to the difficulty is the fact that *folklore* is, by definition, a musical expression of the Argentine rural imaginary and informal lifeways, yet it is being taught in urban classroom settings to a student population that hails mainly from the capital city and its suburbs. Furthermore, both the EMPA and Falla programs attempt to provide a rather comprehensive national (and somewhat nationalist) perspective on the various forms, genres, and aesthetics of rural musical life in Argentina, while at the same time recognizing and even celebrating the specificity of local practices. This balance, based in a national imaginary that reflects Argentina's federalist political heritage of a whole consisting of relatively independent and autonomous parts, has a long history in the national construction of "folklore." As I discussed in Chapter 2, both commercial enterprises such as Andrés Chazarreta's traveling dance troupe and academic projects such as the field recording projects undertaken by Carlos Vega and Isabel Aretz approached the construction of a national folklore that consisted of a mosaic of interconnected but distinct regional styles.

In the EMPA and Falla programs, professors frequently make allusion to regional specificity and even acknowledge that a pan-regional interest in mastery of local musical styles is very much an artifact of the metropole and of the academy. In an introductory clinic to the charango that EMPA teacher "Toro" Stafforini gave during the period when regular classes were suspended in early 2007, he demonstrated several different regional variations and elaborations of strumming patterns for the *chacarera.* "You'd never go to Santiago del Estero [province] and play a *chacarera* the way a *cordobés*[59] would, or *chau!*" he explained,

> In some places in the northwest, there are really important differences from one valley to the next in the way they play. But they'd never be interested in, much less accept, the way the other one plays. That interest in learning all the different styles – that's very much an Avellaneda school thing (Stafforini 2007).

At the Falla conservatory as well, students were cognizant of a relationship between the set of specific dance rhythms and forms that made up their introduction to *folklore* and corresponding regions of the country. One first year student asked in class about folkloric music from Patagonia, an area that did not receive much attention in the curriculum: "So, we're learning all these styles from the northwest, *zamba, vidala* . . .la Rioja has the *chaya,* the Cuyo [region] has the *cueca* and *tonada,* there's *chamamé* in the littoral, *milonga* from [the province of] Buenos Aires . . . what *folklore* does the south have?" In the form of his question, I believe it was clear that the student had generated a cognitive map of a federalist nation, where province or region and musical genre were homologous, and each region ought to receive equal treatment.

[59] i.e. a resident of the neighboring province of Córdoba.

Just as importantly, many teachers at both schools stressed a notion of a naturalized relationship between landscape, language, the voice, and musical style. In the same introductory charango clinic, Stafforini demonstrated the *chasguido* technique common to Argentine folkloric guitar and charango styles – a right hand strumming technique that produces a percussive snap of indefinite pitch by keeping the strings from vibrating freely. Stafforini explained that this sound is related to the hard, plosive consonants frequent in the Quechua language used among indigenous groups in the Argentine northwest, and furthermore surmised that [what he believed to be] the relative frequency of closed, consonant sounds and paucity of lengthy vowel sounds in Quechua and many languages from cold regions had a biological basis in humans' reluctance to open their mouths wider, exposing them to the harsh cold air!

Similarly, during a group class in "ethics and ontology of art" at the Falla conservatory, professor Liliana Herrero (who besides teaching philosophy is also a professional *folklore* singer) recalled a conversation early in her career with *folklore* composer and pianist Gustavo "Cuchi" Leguizamón:

> I remember early on, el Cuchi heard me sing, and he said to me "you have to let your voice break." So I tried it . . . and it didn't come out right. And then he said "Of course, you're from the littoral.[60] You don't have to make your voice break . . . your voice isn't going to sound like the mountains if you're from the riverbank."

Of course, embracing the notion of an inherent connection between landscape, locality, and musical authenticity creates a problem for students who are aspiring toward mastery of musical styles from far-flung locales. For many EMPA and Falla *folklore* students, one

[60] Herrero was born in a small town in the province of Entre Ríos in the northeastern littoral. Leguizamón lived in the mountainous northwestern province of Salta.

common solution to this problem has been to undertake periodic trips to places they see as cultural wellsprings of *folklore*, typically Bolivia or the Argentine northwest. One EMPA piano student who had traveled through Jujuy province and Bolivia during his summer vacation joked when he returned that he "saw more EMPA students up there than [he did] in class, it's full of leftist hippie Argentine musicians" (2007, p.c.). Frequently these students bring instruments, and many students returning from such trips cite musical exchanges with local residents as fundamental experiences in solidifying their own concepts of *folklore* and their own identities as *folklore* musicians:

> In 2004, I went to Tucumán, I go there a lot, and stayed two months there, for a summer. And I met a bandoneon player there, an old guy from there, that plays like this, back-porch *criollo* style, for people to dance. He plays and plays, the guy goes for hours – *zamba, gato, chacarera, zamba, gato, chacarera*, a couple of *chamamés*, and [they're yelling] "*gatito, gatito*!" [and he'll play] another *gato*..like that.[61] And I was playing with this old guy a whole bunch, and I think that's where all of this fell into place for me. Just strumming for hours like this, with this guy, a hundred miles an hour.[62] I got this pain in my elbow, playing for two, three-day long parties, hardly sleeping (2007, p.c.).

For some of these students, however, these encounters have precipitated not a validation of their own desired identity as folklore musicians, but rather a re-assessment of their own subject positions as musicians. Marina, a student who graduated from EMPA studying electric bass in the *folklore* program, remembers how her first encounters playing with musicians in Córdoba province eventually led her to focus her own energies on the tango band in which she sings:

> We made friends there, we played all over the place, people were really avid about hearing things, mostly tango. Because, of course, we weren't aware of

[61] *Zamba, gato,* and *chacarera* are all folkloric dance forms danced by non-embracing couples originating from the Argentine northwest. *Chamamé* is a lively dance from the northeastern littoral region danced by embracing partners.
[62] i.e. "*ahí creo que terminé de encontrar la vuelta de la historia. Rasgueando horas así, con el tipo, a mil por hora…"*

> this, afterward out there we realizad that the tango is not a music apart [from *folklore*]…what we saw there, from the fact of being out in the provinces, is that people there see [tango] as your *folklore.* Just like the *cordobés* plays a *chacarera,* the *porteño*[63] plays tango. And there's no strange separation there, which here sometimes there is, it's like saying that *folklore* is the music from out there, you know, "the gauchos, the gauchos..." and in reality, every region has its own way of speaking. And we realized that in playing with musicians from [Córdoba]…the way that they speak and the way that they play are super related. And the fact of seeing it in others made us see it in ourselves, you know, to say look, we sing the tango like this, we play this way, we walk the tango this way. Every place has its essence, let's say. And that was, for me, how I understood this question of the tango as folklore. And tango, what is it? My folklore…and so I said O.K., I have to speak musically through tango, because it's my way of speaking (Baigorria 2004, p.c.).

While most *folklore* students who try to reconcile their own urban provenance with an understanding of *folklore* as the natural(ized) musical expression of a rural popular identity do not end up in a genre-hopping crisis of confidence as clearly defined as Marina's, many students do understand it as a difficulty to be overcome. For students at the Falla in particular, the most frequent solution is to seek that rural authenticity in the person of Juan Falú. As a native of Tucumán province and a relative of Eduardo Falú, one of the most prominent guitarists and composers of the folklore boom of the 1960s, Falú retains a certain non-academic cachet despite being titular head of the academic program. Students recognize this contradiction, and generally see it is a positive aspect of their academic experience. One fourth-year guitar student's explanation to me was typical in this regard:

> MO: Are there aspects of the Falla program that have had an important impact on the way you make and think about music?
>
> AB: Let's say, in all the parts that are about music, theory, those things, there's a lot of teachers who are really good at giving that. That there are things that I was able to understand well because they know how to say it. They know how to transmit it. Maybe, with respect to all that is about a way

[63] Resident of the port city, i.e. native of Buenos Aires.

> of life, let's say, because *folklore* represents many other things, all the rest is the richest part of folklore, outside of the strictly musical.
>
> MO: For example?
>
> AB: For example, I don't know… Juan [Falú], let's say, makes an impression with me all the time. In his vision, the way that he lives music. It's a way that I like to live. Like, it becomes part of something very quotidian, but that you can also live outside of the institution. That's what's good about this institution, that they [the professors] bring things in, that it doesn't go the way of just formalism. . . Before – now it's happening a little less, but before we got together a lot to *guitarrear,*[64] for example. There was a lot of that "hey, let's get together, come on," thing, and we'd *guitarrear* all afternoon, or all night. On one hand you say "hey, this isn't a class," but it is!

Falú himself, I believe, also deliberately cultivated some of that cachet, and was clearly aware of the contradictions inherent in his position. I observed his introductory "Forms and Rhythms of *folklore"* course for several months. On one of the first days in the new school year, the class was to be devoted to the *zamba*, a slow and often contemplative dance form that developed out of the *zamacueca.* When the students arrived, Falú had already written on the board a typical *rasgueo* (strumming) pattern for the style, as well as five standard rhythmic variations on this pattern. But at no point during the two-hour class did he ever direct students' attention to these notated patterns; in fact when he noticed a student assiduously copying his notation halfway through the hour, he downplayed their importance, explaining "Don't take these too seriously – the way I learned these was not by copying, but by having *guitarreado*[65] from a very early age, and having drunk many, many hexaliters [of wine]." He paused for a moment and (perhaps for the benefit of the foreign academic, who had just been introduced to him) remarked further, "I saw a thesis recently, by a student in

[64] The verb *guitarrear*, implies a highly informal, and not necessarily accomplished approach to communal playing. Group participation is valued over virtuosity or polished performance, although in the case of *guitarreadas* I witnessed at the Falla, many students and teachers demonstrated a very fine level of musicianship.
[65] i.e. the participle form of the verb *guitarrear* (see above).

music theory at [the Universidad Nacional de] La Plata. It explained my harmonic technique. It was very elaborate, very impressive . . . and I'll confess I couldn't even recognize myself!"

But if Falú was trying to inculcate them with a suspicion of methodical academic approaches to *folklore*, he was equally emphatic in demonstrating how informal learning techniques and environments could still be serious work and fundamental to developing the body of knowledge necessary to become an accomplished *folklore* musician. The class on the introduction to the *zamba*, like many of Falú's classes, gave him an opportunity to demonstrate his facility as a gifted pedagogical improviser. As he sat in front of the class, guitar in hand, students quieted and turned their attention to him."*Che*, that *mate* going around, is it good and hot? And bitter?" he asked a student who had been serving a group of her classmates, each in turn, pouring hot water into the communally shared gourd. When she nodded, he continued, "Do you think it could make its way up here?" The student refilled and passed the *mate* forward.

When Falú had taken his turn, he passed it back, picked up his guitar, and began the lesson: "Now, who knows a zamba?" No one spoke for a moment, so he continued: "Any zamba at all, except 'Zamba de mi esperanza,' I'm sick of that one." Finally, one student, a girl in her first year, offered that she knew "Zamba del Lozano."[66] "Okay, good," Juan responded, strumming a few chords. The student hummed a few notes, and they both realized that the key was too low for her. "Where would you like to sing it?" he asked, and she sang the first few notes of the melody in a higher key. Falú tried a few chords before

[66] Lyrics by Manuel Castilla, music by Gustavo "Cuchi" Leguizamón.

finding the key she was in, and then played an improvised 8-bar introduction. The student closed her eyes, and began to sing in a clear, intimate soprano:

Cielo arriba de Jujuy	Sky above Jujuy
Camino a la puna me voy a cantar	Onward toward the highlands, I go to sing
Flores de los tolares	Flowers of the *tola* grasses
Bailan las cholitas el carnaval	The women dance the *carnival.*
En los ojos de las llamas	In the llamas' eyes
Se mira solita la luna de sal	The salt moon watches itself
Y están los remolinos	And there are whirlwinds
En los arenales del bailar.	In the dance's sand dunes.
Ramito de albahaca	Little sprig of basil
Niña Yolanda donde andará	Little girl, Yolanda where could she be?
Atrás se quedó alumbrando	[she] stayed behind, shining
Su claridad	her light.
Jujeñita, quién te vio	Little woman from Jujuy, who saw you
En la puna triste te vuelve a querer	In the sad highlands, she loves you again
Mi pena se va al aire	My pain disappears into the air,
Y en el aire llora su padecer	and in the air, cries its suffering.
Me voy yendo volveré	I´ll be going, I will return
Los tolares solos se han vuelto a quedar	The tola grasses have returned to stay
Se quemará en tus ojos	In your eyes will burn
Zamba enamorada del carnaval	[this] carnaval zamba of love

Several times at the beginning of the later verses, the student hesitated for a moment, and Juan Falú sang a word or two, reminding her of the text, but otherwise he did not interfere with her performance, following her lead and improvising melodic fragments interspersed between the verses.

This strategy of appealing to students for direct participation, but in ways that they could not anticipate prior to the class was one that Juan Falú drew upon often in the Folklore class. In effect, it served to recreate within the classroom a performance context not unlike the informal *peñas* and social gatherings that *folklore* musicians idealize as the

quintessential setting for making and listening to this music. In the process, he demonstrated a set of the fundamental knowledge and skills that constitute musical competency in the genre: a deep familiarity with a broad range of *folklore* repertoire, indicated by his invitation for students to sing any zamba they could think of and discouraging the well-tread "Zamba de mi esperanza," a good memory for song texts as well as music (similarly for tango musicians, knowledge of the text is essential even for instrumentalists), the ability to transpose spontaneously and to create original melodic introductions and transitions between verses.

But just as importantly as the musical skills he was demonstrating, Falú was at the same time was performing *social* aspects of competency in the genre: friendly informality (both the informal "*che*" with which he addressed the student before class, and the act of sharing *mate* together are indicative of a relaxed and egalitarian conviviality) and a reluctance to over-structure the encounter. At times, it seemed his insistence on informality and spontaneity was the most difficult for students to learn in a classroom setting. I was occasionally guilty of this myself; on my first day in the Falla I introduced myself before Falú's class and asked, as a part of my ongoing research, permission to attend his class as an observer. Juan cut me off before I could finish. "Better not to ask permission for things," he smirked. "When you ask permission, and give permission, things get complicated." And then he turned to start the class.

Falú was similarly reluctant to provide definitive answers on any number of topics, particularly with regard to musical practice. During the same zamba class, a guitar student later asked him about a particular chord he had substituted for the traditional harmony in the "Zamba del Lozano," asking "in the recording of that piece that you did with Liliana

Herrero,[67] you played something else there, an F sharp minor maybe?" "The truth is I don't remember," Juan answered him. "I decide these things as I go."

Falú's insistence on spontaneity in the performance context, and on "never playing the same zamba two times the same way" (Sima 2007, p.c.) was of course somewhat undermined by the pervasiveness of sound recording technology in the school and professional settings in which he worked. As the student's question above indicated, commercial recordings, including those by teachers within the school, served to crystallize particular performances and lend to them an aura of quasi-Urtextual authority that undermined an aesthetic approach that privileged innovation and spontaneity and discouraged mimesis. As recording equipment has become cheaper and more readily available in Argentina, its presence has also become more common in informal settings; I occasionally saw students record informal *guitarreadas* or in-class performances with small digital audio recorders, and home video recordings of professional *folklore* musicians including both Juan Falú and Liliana Herrero performing at family or community social gatherings can now be easily accessed on video sharing and social media sites such as YouTube. On one hand, the increasing availability of such material serves to broaden students' knowledge of the genre, as it allows them to hear a wider array of performers and of repertoire than they would were they to restrict themselves to live performances, and also can lend a perspective about the range of musical factors that can vary from performance to performance. But it also renders less important one of the skills that older successful *folklore* musicians needed to depend upon heavily: a quick and reliable memory for music and text.

[67] (Herrero and Falú 2000).

Ultimately, I believe that many aspects of pedagogy in the *folklore* classes at the Falla conservatory constituted a sort of compromise between an imaginary of an idealized *folklore* music culture that is an informal, orally transmitted, and spontaneous expression of rural musicians – an imaginary that Juan Falú does his best to promote and embody – and the strictures of an urban, state-run educational setting in a culture that privileges the scriptural, the systematic, and fetishizes the musical object over musical process. Students who aspire to become authentic exponents of the *folklore* genre are frequently conscious of the inherent tension between their urban provenance and the systematic nature of their musical education on one hand and their shared imaginary of the genre as the organic expression of rural Argentina on the other.

Consolidation of genres: jazz[68]

Considering the implicit cultural nationalism, and explicit anti-colonialist ideology behind the EMPA's other two programs, the third curricular area devoted to a North American musical tradition may seem at first to be an anomaly. In practice, however I found the ideology and practice of jazz education within Argentina to be not only compatible with those developed in the other two genre specializations within these schools, but in fact to have been the model for them. While politicians and teachers arguing for the value of these schools and the cultural traditions that they represent often appealed to notions of nationalism and the valorization of Argentine culture on its own terms, it was – as EMPA

[68] Except where noted, my analysis in this section concerns only the jazz program at EMPA. Although the Falla does have a jazz program, it is entirely separate from the *folklore*/tango program although it shares the same space. Because of time limitations, I was not able to study the Falla jazz program while simultaneously continuing my research at EMPA.

founding teacher Manolo Juárez remembers it – only through a negative comparison to pedagogical models for foreign popular musics that the political impetus for EMPA emerged. Juárez recalled that when José Gabriel Dumón, then the director general of education and culture for the province of Buenos Aires, approached him about starting such a school, telling him that "[his] daughters play guitar, they play jazz, blues, bossa nova. There are method books, cassettes, LPs for that, but there is no method book to teach them tango or folklore." (Pedroso 2007, 97). Some of these books were imports from Brazilian or North American publishers, and their popularity in Argentina was additionally increased by Argentine musicians who traveled to the U.S. to study jazz, particularly at the Berklee College of Music. One contemporary Argentine jazz musician recalled that, during the late 1970s, a favorable exchange rate with the U.S. dollar made it "cost the same for any family with money to send their kid to study in Boston as to study in Buenos Aires" and that, having remained in Argentina he believed himself to be the exception, rather than the norm (Iaies 2003, p.c.).

Back in Buenos Aires, jazz instruction methods were not strictly an import-only affair, however. In fact, local pedagogies devoted to jazz preceded those for tango or folklore by several years. One well-known local jazz guitarist had published a series of method books for jazz improvisation and opened a small private jazz guitar school by the late 1970s (Malosetti 1975; 1976; 1979).

Nonetheless, the Berklee School remains one of the most important influences in shaping the EMPA jazz program. Several of the current EMPA jazz and tango faculty are Berklee graduates, including Ariel Goldemberg, the head of the jazz department. Furthermore, in at least some of the *lenguaje musical* (music theory) classes, the curricular

materials are directly borrowed from the Berklee curriculum. In one class I observed, students studied techniques for three- and four-part voice leading from photocopies of Berklee textbooks, while the teacher verbally translated from the English text as the class went.

I suspect that this sort of borrowing from early on in the jazz curriculum, while the other curricular areas were developing an entirely new program from scratch is one of the reasons that students in the early years of EMPA remembered the jazz program as the "most put together"[69] (Maidana 2007, p.c.). Current students' perceptions of the differences between the three curricular areas continue to reflect this belief. I spoke to several students who were debating the merits of the various programs from which they would have to choose in the next year of their degree. "Jazz is the most organized, pedagogically," one student observed. Another agreed, "their program is very clear. It's not necessarily the music I most identify with, but I think their objective is the most defined."

In fact, one important difference between the jazz program and the tango and *folklore* departments concerned the students' motivations for choosing that particular specialization. For the most part, tango and *folklore* students tended to phrase their preference for that genre in terms of identity, of feeling represented by or identifying with the music because of their own geographic, cultural, linguistic, or ideological affinity as well as an appreciation for the musical aesthetic. Many of the jazz students I interviewed enjoyed jazz, but unlike their counterparts in the other programs they did not particularly identify with the music they had chosen to study. In fact, quite a few of them were not ultimately interested in performing jazz per se, but rather using the techniques and theoretical training

[69] "*más armado*"

that a background in jazz afforded them in order to pursue interests in other genres, such as *bossa nova,* rock, reggae, or funk. Jazz, in effect, functioned less as a genre occupying a unique sociocultural space in the school than it did as a series of technical and conceptual expressive resources that students sought to appropriate in order to apply them toward other musical genres.

This tendency to apply elements of jazz practice – specifically, use of jazz-like harmonies and techniques of improvisation – toward other *música popular* genres has also become an official part of the curriculum at EMPA. Javier Cohen, the current director of the tango area, began his career at EMPA as a teacher of jazz guitar and had studied improvisation with jazz guitarist Jim Hall in the U.S. Since assuming the directorship of the tango area, one of his principal innovations has been adding a "Workshop in Improvisation in Tango" course to the curriculum. In the course, which Cohen teaches himself, students learn to improvise "free variations," melodic inventions based upon the harmonic and rhythmic base of well-known tango tunes such as "Gallo ciego," "Los mareados," and "El choclo."

Similarly, one of the third-year *folklore* ensembles directed by Lilián Saba performed an arrangement of Oscar Alem's malambo "Toda la pampa" in which they created an open section where a pianist improvised a jazz-style solo over a guitar vamp. Saba, who arranged all of the repertoire for her ensemble herself, explained that this choice was mainly motivated by "having a kid who can really improvise" in the group, and wanting to showcase this ability (Saba 2007, p.c.). I suspect that this reflected the unique cross-genre training that students at EMPA were given; I saw Saba direct a very similar ensemble arrangement of the same piece at the Falla conservatory in August 2008 that included no improvised solos.

Of course, jazz influence in *folklore* and tango – particularly the latter – is not new or exclusive to the EMPA program. "Golden age" tango musicians frequently shared performance venues and dates with local jazz artists, and some musicians played both genres professionally as early as the 1920s (Pujol 2004, 80). "*Tango nuevo"* composer and bandoneonist Astor Piazzolla performed and recorded with noted jazz vibraphonist Gary Burton and saxophonist Gerry Mulligan during the 1960s, and the jazz influences into his own compositions range from the use of "blue notes" to extended improvised solos (Atlas 2008; Martino 2008). Nonetheless, Piazzolla's aesthetic and social identity is distinctive and idiosynractic enough that many scholars have treated his music not as representative *of* tango, but rather an extension of it (Kuri 1997; Mauriño 2001). And ultimately, free melodic improvisation *à la* jazz remained an unusual enough practice among mainstream tango musicians that Horacio Salgán's 2001 treatise on tango composition and arranging declared that " tango, unlike jazz – where the theme is presented, then [players] improvise freely without the theme being present […] – requires that the theme, or reminiscences of it be as present as possible" (Salgán 2001, 34). What I believe is significant in the ways that jazz techniques are employed and transmitted in the EMPA context is that they attain an ideological content very much in keeping with their understanding of the counterhegemonic ethics of *música popular:*

> Jazz was, for me, very attractive not because of the jazz idiom but rather because of what some jazz musicians were able to say in that language, musicians who have had a great impact on me… I think they have a revolutionary message with respect to what they wanted to do with their society… I feel the necessity to express music spontaneously, that has a different viewpoint, the viewpoint of the musician within that musical framework …who goes the way of telling you what is happening to him in that moment. That, to me, in whatever [musical] language, is a unique value… I think that if there's one problem that the tango suffered, let's say,

> between the 1950s and today, it doesn't have to do directly with the music but rather that the music reflects problems that are, you know, more social. Where, through different political circumstances, the country has developed a lack of welcoming individuals' thoughts. It's known what the military dictatorship meant for us, that was a social consciousness where it was not natural that one would say what one was thinking. So improvisation in tango reflects that – the tango musician is trained to say what someone [else] thinks, and not what he thinks himself… It seems to me that now we're beginning to return to trusting in what one wants to say individually. And that has been my main interest as director of the tango department (Cohen 2004, p.c.).

For Cohen, then, the link between jazz and tango that justifies "importing" techniques of melodic improvisation are not based in the similarities in musical structures (particularly harmony) between the two genres but rather in affinities of ideology. This position is far from a unanimous one among tango musicians in the larger community; tango is a genre whose sociocultural value in Buenos Aires has historically been predicated on an "authentic" local identity, and whose boundaries have been contested and policed when faced with extra-local musical influence.[70] But given the strong link between political activism and populist identity with studies at EMPA, it is perhaps unsurprising that a "revolutionary message" based in a counterhegemonic subject position was enough of an ideological common thread between jazz (specifically, bop-era jazz) as a geographically and historically situated genre and Argentine genres of *música popular* to justify a cross-genre drift of stylistic elements within the EMPA curriculum and community.

Genre convergences: Harmony

[70] Piazzolla has been the most high-profile target of such charges but as rock and jazz influences have become more prevalent in tango in the last decade, detractors have leveled similar charges against contemporary musicians as well (Luker 2007; O'Brien 2005).

While the cross-genre adoption of techniques of jazz-like melodic improvisation were largely unique to the EMPA, both schools developed institutional aesthetics in tango and *folklore* that showed a preference for jazz-derived harmonic practices. Curricula at both schools heavily stressed the use of the *cifrado americano*, or American jazz-style chord symbol notation, as the basis for both analysis and practical performance. Traditionally, neither *folklore* nor tango musicians would have relied on such notation; published scores in both genres are generally simplified piano reductions of recorded tunes. The reliance on the American letter-name system for chords is somewhat counterintuitive for Spanish speakers as they use solfège syllables rather than letters to refer to specific pitches (C is Do, D is Re, etc.) but when I pointed this out students typically acknowledged that it had been a skill they had needed to learn, but not a particularly difficult one, and employed the two systems simultaneously, such as referring verbally to a "Sol séptima" while writing "G7" without any apparent effort or thought. Argentine musicologist and popular musician Leandro Donoso recalls that this practice became widespread among popular musicians in Argentina during the 1970s with the advent of American rock music magazines, where aspiring guitarists would learn favorite tunes by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and other artists by playing the indicated chords along with recordings or with friends, a process well-known to popular musicians in many cultures (Green 2001, 61).

At EMPA, the use of the *cifrado* system is taught mainly within the *lenguaje musical* (applied music theory) curriculum, but students are expected to be able not only to generate voicings and fully notated arrangements from these harmonic sketches, but also to realize on their instruments standard accompanimental patterns in genre-appropriate idioms using only the *cifrado.*

At the Falla, "Cifrados" constitutes an entire course, where students learn both the theoretical and practical applications of the chord notation system, learning the spelling of major, minor, diminished and augmented chords but also a full complement of jazz-inflected "extensions" such as sevenths, ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths, and approaches to voicing them on piano and guitar. In the "Variations" course, which occurs later in the sequence of the applied theory curriculum there (see Chapter 3, Appendix A) students learned a system of choosing appropriate scales and modes to construct melodies for original *zambas* based around the harmonic structures of Miles Davis' "Blue in Green" and Chick Corea's "500 Miles High." The system for choosing appropriate scales was essentially the same as the "chord-scale system" organized and advocated by jazz educator David Baker in his *Jazz Pedagogy: A Comprehensive Method of Jazz Education for Teacher and Student* (Baker 1981) and widely popularized internationally by the series of books and play-along recordings published by Jamey Aebersold.

As David Ake points out, one of the particular methods behind the Abersold "scale syllabus" approach to teaching improvisation is the concept of "note choice," where students are encouraged to "aspire to higher degrees of dissonance" as they develop technically on their instrument (Ake 2002b, 123). I believe that this unspoken association between dissonance and complexity is a hallmark of the institutionalization of popular music that North American jazz education programs and these Argentine programs share, despite differences in genre. Conceptually, this conflation of dissonance, complexity, and technical advancement is in keeping with a teleological historiography of the development of Western art music as an increasing tendency toward the use of dissonance. One of the principal music theory teachers at the EMPA, Lito Valle, gave an informal introductory workshop on

harmony[71] for new students during the months when classes were suspended during 2007 in which he explained music history in precisely these terms. He explained how the gradual acceptance of first perfect intervals (parallel organum), then tertian harmonies (*ars nova*), then dominant sevenths and ultimately closer dissonances through the Common Practice period of Western classical music was a natural (and perhaps inevitable) homologue of the decreasing distance between notes of the harmonic series, and the evolution toward harmonic practices that looked farther up the harmonic series was, by implication, naturally more advanced.

There are clearly disputable elements among Valle's claims, of course – both in terms of historical fact (dissonances closer than the third existed even within Western polyphony well before tertian and triadic harmonies became standardized), in terms of the narrow Eurocentric focus on "music history" to the exclusion of music in other parts of the world and in terms of the relationship between the Western scale and the harmonic series. But I reproduce his claims here not in order to reify or dispute their historical accuracy but rather to explore how historiography (even the informal and discursive kind) as well as theory curricula have contributed to the ways that harmonic complexity has become an aesthetic norm and value among students of these programs.

Students at both schools frequently cited the systematic introduction to the *cifrado* system in particular, and to advanced harmony in general as one of the most useful aspects of their training in these programs. But enthusiasm for the pervasive valuation of complex and jazz-influenced harmonies was not unanimous. Echoing David Ake's criticism of North

[71] I did not observe Valle's regular *lenguaje musical* courses, but as this one-day workshop was offered as an introduction to that curriculum, I believe it to be a fair, if condensed representation of the ways in which the same topic and concepts would have been taught in the standard classroom curriculum as well.

American jazz programs that privileged harmony to the neglect of teaching the importance of aspects such as timbre in improvisation (Ake 2002a, 165), one EMPA tango student expressed her frustration with her department's focus on harmony to the neglect of other important stylistic elements of tango music:

> NM: The form of the *fraseo,*[72] the accentuation, I notice that the tango students don't pay attention to that. Very few [do]. At least the ones that I am involved with at school, don't give it much importance.
>
> MO: And what are they focused on, if not on that?
>
> NM: Well, on making harmonic, contrapuntal evolution. And that's great… but for me both things have to be there. What's more, if I play something harmonically simple, but I accent it [like tango], I like it, even though it's simple. Other people [in the school would] say it's a piece of shit because there aren't any sevenths in the chords (2004, p.c.).

Similarly, a student in the Falla program found the emphasis on chord extensions in arrangements limiting not because it encouraged neglect of other stylistic elements, but because her instrument, the charango, led her (whether due to mere convention or to the physical limitations of the instrument was not clear) to favor simpler triadic harmonies. She explained this in the context of a discussion where I had asked her whether she thought there were unspoken rules or conventions in musical style in her program that students were encouraged to follow:

> I do think there is, unconsciously, an aesthetic ideal, let's say. It seems to me. I don't know that it's like a categorical thing… but, suppose….on the charango, for us, basically there's like a division…what we do with the charango is basically traditional, so the harmonies that I manage on the charango are very traditional. In the rest of my classes there's another harmony that sometimes, let's say, I find interesting. It seems there's a consensus in this kind of music, in harmony as a style, that there are things that have to do with jazz, or things that come from there. [But] I don't think

[72] Lit. "phrasing," *fraseo* in tango refers to the style of melodic rubato that is closely linked to the prosody of the local Spanish dialect (Pelinski 2000, 40).

> they'd censure me, say, if they heard me play absolutely traditionally (2007, p.c.).

This student was careful to articulate that there would not necessarily be any specific consequences for choosing not to adopt a jazz-inflected harmonic style in her own playing or writing while simultaneously acknowledging that such a choice would necessarily entail a departure from an unspoken social norm. In essence, I believe that these tendencies toward jazz-like harmonies function as something of an aesthetic *habitus* within the school setting. Students are required to demonstrate knowledge of and performative competence in using these harmonic conventions, and they are certainly emphasized and favored in the students' and professors' arrangements that are performed in the ensemble classes. But outside of the classroom, students are of course free to choose whether or not to employ such techniques in their own extracurricular and professional musical activities, and as the comments from the two students above indicate, at least some of them do make the conscious choice to emphasize other elements of a musical aesthetic.

Genre convergences: Scripturality, aurality, and compositional authority

In his seminal ethnography of a classical conservatory on the East Coast of the U.S., Henry Kingsbury describes a master class in which a respected piano professor is giving instruction on interpretation to a young student. When the professor instructs the student to play a series of notes longer, the student objects by explaining that they are marked staccato in the score. The professor's rejoinder also appeals to the authority of the score, when he claims that the student's edition is inferior to the original, in which the notation was longer. As Kingsbury explains, while aesthetic decisions were certainly grounded in the

unequal power relationships in the room, in nearly all cases arguments about aesthetics could be strengthened by appealing to the communally shared "devout respect for the creativity of the composer" as manifest in the score (Kingsbury 1988, 87-88).

It is difficult to imagine such an exchange ever taking place in either of these *música popular* programs. The notion of a score containing a complete record of all the necessary information in order to produce a satisfactory performance of a piece is simply not relevant to *música popular*, where students and professionals alike depend on a wide array of notational schema as prescriptive instructions to fellow musicians and mnemonic devices for themselves. Furthermore, complete scores of even the most canonic of *música popular* pieces are highly unusual. Generally tango and *folklore* compositions, when they are published in written form at all, are available as a simplified piano reduction or, in more recent years, a transcription of the principal vocal melody and chord symbols in publications similar to a jazz fake book.

To a certain extent, canonical recordings of these pieces supplement the role of the score in providing direction to musicians looking to learn an existing piece. But even in these cases, the authority is undermined, for popular musicians never look to exactly replicate an existing recording but rather to use it a guide in creating their own original version. Thus the strict division between composer and performer is always at least somewhat blurred; performing *música popular* by necessity involves imposing one's own compositional intentions, as an arranger (written or otherwise) of the source material.

I believe that popular musicians' tendency to downplay the significance of the score, and by extension the authority of the composer, are fundamentally interrelated with the social praxis of egalitarianism and the encouragement of individual idiosyncrasy in musical

aesthetics within these institutional settings. This egalitarianism is not limitless, and is contingent upon performing some degree of competence within what I have called the system of cultural authority (see Chapter 3). For unlike the system of political authority, this informal system allows for a far more flexible relationship between teachers and students in which aesthetic judgments, the symbolic coin of the realm, are not absolute but allow for – and in fact, encourage – students ultimately to strike out on their own aesthetic path, divergent from the musical practices of their elders.

In classroom settings, I repeatedly saw teachers and students alike discursively appeal not to scriptural sources of authority when questions of aesthetic practice arose, but rather to rely upon aural and oral practices of transmission and creation, a process I believe reinforced and was in turn reinforced by the more egalitarian system of cultural authority. I will examine several instances of this in some detail, and then follow with a more general analysis of the connections of such practices with the socially maintained ideology of these institutions.

In late October of 2006, a multi-level group class of charango students at EMPA were beginning to prepare for their end-of-year playing examinations. According to the official *plan de estudios*, the students were responsible for a set of solo arrangements of traditional *huaynos*, *chacareras*, and other pieces as well as scales and technical exercises. Toro, the charango teacher, requested the pieces one by one, and appeared somewhat surprised when the students struggled to perform them adequately. "You haven't played these in a while," he guessed, and the students acknowledged that he was right. As I had observed the class for the previous several weeks, I was also somewhat surprised by this sudden show of

difficulty and apparent lack of preparedness.

The previous classes had been far more student-directed: one first year student played a well-known *huayno*, "Ojos azules," in F-sharp minor, which she had taught herself by ear. The tune was fully written, in another key in the course materials, but Toro was pleased that she had discovered workable harmonies herself, and since the key fit her voice better, did not make her learn the required key. Instead, while she performed he instructed the advanced students to improvise accompanimental figures in the new key. Another, more advanced student's lesson was devoted almost entirely to performances of several of his own compositions, including a Bolivian-style *takirari*. Toro had been roundly enthusiastic about these students' initiatives, and had not mentioned the official curriculum during these weeks. When these students then showed difficulty with the required curriculum (I later learned that they had mastered it all effectively several months before and had effectively moved on), he was not upset, but rather said simply "you'll need to look at those again. I'll be back in a few minutes," and left the room. I then watched the students try, as a group, to reconstruct from memory one of the required pieces. Several of them had a clearer idea than the others, or would try part of a melodic phrase hoping that muscle or aural memory would bring the rest of it to mind. Their progress was slow, and after about ten minutes or so of group effort they had mostly pieced together a single *chacarera*. I spoke to one of the students after class in the hall, asking whether they didn't have a written version of the piece on which to rely. "Sure, it's in our *cuaderno,*" he replied, referring to the official booklet of arrangements that constituted the text for instrumental classes. In fact, several of the students in the class had brought their *cuadernos* to the lesson, but evidently they found it more expedient to rely on collective aural and muscle memory than to consult the written transcription when they

encountered difficulty.

Also in October of 2006 I observed a third-year tango ensemble class at EMPA, where instructor Fernando Diéguez was teaching a group consisting of piano, three guitars, and electric bass and playing cello in the ensemble himself. While some ensemble instructors created fully written-out arrangements tailored to the group (and students were expected to be able to read and perform these effectively), Diéguez had decided that this ensemble was advanced enough to try *a la parrilla* playing – creating an unwritten group arrangement by ear, drawing from a vocabulary of standard accompanimental figures and idiomatic forms of melodic *fraseo*. After a few times of listening through an iconic performance of the milonga "La trampera," the group ran through the piece, fumbling to find the melody and correct chords. As a group, they discussed who would play the principal melodic role during which section, and Diéguez only interjected from time to time when he found the students' musical ideas unworkable: suggesting a substitute harmonic progression in one place, and asking the pianist to switch octaves to create a clearer ensemble texture in another. Over the course of several weeks, I watched the group transform this piece and several others, opting in many cases to subvert genre conventions. In the well-known sung tango "El último café," for example, they eventually developed an arrangement where the electric bass played the principal melodic role, and the rest of the group created a repeating two-bar vamp in *bolero* rhythm to introduce the piece. There was a ludic quality to this genre-bending, a sense of an in-joke among tango musicians who were well familiar with, and thus given permission to subvert, aesthetic expectations. After the end-of-semester concert where the ensemble performed this piece, the tango department

director complemented Diéguez on his leadership. "Hey, that 'Trío Los Panchos' intro you put on 'El último café,' that was great," he said with a chuckle.

In May of 2007, I observed bassist Willy González's "Versions" class for third-year students in the Falla program. In the course, one of the typical strategies González used to teach stylistic conventions was to have students re-arrange a well-known piece into a different style, or create a new piece based on some structural aspect of an existing piece and a different genre's conventions. In addition to the examples already listed in this chapter (a Bach prelude rhythmically rearranged into a *cueca*, an original *zamba* based on the harmonic structure of a Chick Corea tune), one of the assignments I observed students develop and perform in class required them to create an original *candombe*—an Afro-*rioplatense* rhythm that has been popular with Uruguayan popular musicians – using the harmonic progression from the classic tango "Los mareados." In the first week, several students brought in skeletal arrangements with notated piano rhythms that González rejected, demonstrating how their syncopations did not effectively complement the structural "*madera*" rhythm on which candombe is based.[73] One student had managed to create an idiomatically appropriate part, and González asked the student to play it while he clapped the *madera* part, illustrating how they interlocked effectively.

But several weeks later, rhythmic problems resolved, one student brought in a completed arrangement where he had slightly altered the original harmony, accelerating the harmonic rhythm and compressing two bars' chord changes into one. "You changed the

[73] Rhythmically equal to the 3-2 *son clave* in Cuban music, the *madera* rhythm is sometimes played on the wooden side of traditional *tamboril* drums. But like in Cuban *son*, whether explicitly played or omitted, the rhythm is a generative structural principle which must be maintained in all of the other parts.

harmony there," González pointed out to the student. "Yeah, I thought it sounded better that way," the student replied. The professor paused for a moment, thinking. "Well, that wasn't the assignment," he finally said, "but the idea was to make you internalize the style of *candombe*. And you are showing that you know how it works. So I can say that wasn't the purpose of this assignment, but if you say you like it this way better, okay. I can't say anything."

In each of these cases, the professors made spontaneous pedagogical decisions in the classroom about where and to what extent to impose their authority on the students' musical practices. Each of the teachers had clear ideas of baseline competencies, musical boundaries that were ultimately non-negotiable: Toro, the charango teacher, demanded that students ultimately be capable of performing the standard curricular repertoire; Fernando, the tango ensemble director rejected some of the ensemble's voicings or harmonic choices as incorrect or undesirable; and Willy González wanted to ensure that his "Versions" students had a clear idea of standard rhythmic practice in *candombe*. But each of them also relinquished some degree of cultural authority over what and how students would play once they had demonstrated a sufficient level of competence – whether that authority be to change the harmonies on well-known pieces, or to knowingly subvert genre conventions.

Ultimately, in fact, students are not only *permitted* to challenge (some) of the established aesthetic conventions in the genres they study, they are in fact *expected* to do so. I observed a cello lesson in which Patricio Villarejo, the cello professor in the Falla program, was teaching an intermediate student who was studying the slow, melodic *milonga*-style piece "Oblivion" by Astor Piazzolla. After the student played a somewhat halting, but correct

reading of the written melody, Villarejo encouraged her to find ways to ornament and phrase the melody that departed from the score. "Like where, how?" the student asked. "I can't tell you, you've just got to try it," he responded. "If I tell you how to phrase it, then you'll phrase it like I do. You have to figure out how to play it like you. That's my job here, not to help you play perfectly, but to help you play your way, the best your way, that you can."

I believe that this underlines a fundamental difference between the ways that cultural authority and musical aesthetics work in the *música popular* schools and in traditional classical conservatories. Since many of the students at both schools (but particularly the Falla, where it was required) had begun their musical training in classical conservatories, they were a frequent point of comparison when students spoke about the particular and unique aspects of their experience in the *música popular* programs. Nearly all of the students I interviewed identified two major differences between the social environment in their new program and in the classical program they had left: a closer, more egalitarian relationship between students and teachers, which many attributed to their shared experiences playing together formally and informally, and a far lesser degree of competition between students in the same program. This latter point, I believe, is partially facilitated by this system of cultural authority that encourages individuality and creativity rather than a shared objective standard of performative competence in an unchanging canonical repertoire. One third-year student at the Falla reflected on this difference:

> There's a lot of loaning of knowledge, sharing, I see it a lot more in this program [than I did in my classical studies]. There's not that selfish thing where "I know this, so I'll keep it for myself," but rather there's a lot more of sharing, I'd say loaning of, I don't know, just for example: "Would you loan me that chord?" "Oh, that sounded great, what was that?" And then I'll pass it along to you. It's all a re-elaboration, but with that idea that one plays their own thing, I don't play like that other person. But even though I use the

> [same] resources, within all the resources that I see other people use, it's good to share. And also, in this I think the repertoire has something to do with it, in the classical [conservatory] you've got this piece, and you never leave the score, so it's one thing. On the other hand, in this [program] there's this re-elaboration, in reality all the time, re-elaboration, the arrangement that you make of this [piece], in reality they're two different paths. And maybe that favors [this sharing] (2007, p.c.).

I do not mean to suggest that the repertoire itself necessitates the social context and ideology that the schools of *música popular* perpetuate. As I have illustrated above, ideology and social context inform the repertoire and musical aesthetics in turn. In these schools, for example, the ways that the oral history and canon formation in the tango programs are shaped by favoring iconoclasm and stylistic innovation over commercial or popular success, or the emphasis on harmonic practices derived from jazz musicians with a "revolutionary" social message, are clearly choices that are at least as informed by sociopolitical meaning as they are by "strictly" musical criteria. But I do believe that the habitus of egalitarianism and collaboration that I so frequently saw in these programs was facilitated by a system of musical aesthetics that allows for individual idiosyncrasy, where aesthetic judgment is not uniformly conferred from above in unequal power relations.

Conclusions

These depictions of a warmly egalitarian and collaborative social environment where teachers judiciously decide where to assert their cultural authority and where to let students diverge from the official path may seem at odds with the macroscopic view of political clientelism, neglect and dysfunction at the institutional and policy level that informed my analysis of the dynamics of institutional and extra-institutional power and politics in the preceding chapter. The key to reconciling these two views of the same schools lies in the

disconnection between the systems of political and cultural authority.

At both of these institutions there was a system of cultural authority, based on performative competence in musical, aesthetic standards that were socially constructed, performed and recognized, that was generally coherent, consistent, and agreed upon. Frequently, practices and values that were entirely consistent with this system of cultural authority were not conducive to the system of political authority as it typically operated within schools of (European classical) music: teachers encouraged all-night *guitarreadas*, told off-color anecdotes about old tango musicians that glorified bohemian excess, allowed and even encouraged students to question their authority on aesthetic matters. Furthermore, students and teachers alike often pointed to these seemingly transgressive moments as instances of the schools functioning at their best. Yet the informal and even inherently chaotic ethos of the cultural habitus of *música popular* also sought to coexist with, and function within, the institutional strictures of the state-run educational system. And at times, that system of political authority pushed back against the informal egalitarianism and spontaneity, and the results ranged from compromise and concession of the Falla's relatively disciplined, schedule-adherent and alcohol-free *guitarreada* described in the introductory chapter to the complete breakdown when EMPA students and professors nearly unanimously called for their director's resignation following months of protests and *escraches*.

Ultimately, though, I am interested in these systems of authority not for their own sake, but rather to understand how they contribute to processes of subject formation for the students who traverse them. While I certainly found these schools of *música popular* to be complicated enough places to necessitate months of study in order to understand their cultural dynamics on their own terms, ultimately the significance of such a study is

dependent upon their having a discernable impact on musicians in the larger public sphere. Toward that end, the following two chapters will examine the ways that these institutions have contributed to a more widely shared sense of *música popular*.

Chapter 5: Putting it into practice: Three *música popular* bands after the academy

It was fieldwork for a more broadly situated urban ethnography of contemporary tango that first drew my attention to the EMPA's importance in the local music scene. Among the school's first few cohorts of graduates were many of the most interesting and important tango and *folklore* musicians of their generation,[74] and nearly all of the scholarly assessments of the post-crisis tango scene have mentioned the school's importance. Ultimately, I believe it is these schools' ability to affect contemporary music culture more broadly that makes them interesting and worthy of study. Having addressed the ways that musical ideology and aesthetics are created and performed within the classroom, I will now address the issue of these classrooms' broader relevance and impact: what exactly do students take away from their experiences in these schools? How do these institutions shape the way that their graduates think about, listen to, and make music in the long term?

This chapter will consider three case studies: a tango band and a *folklore* band whose members are all (or nearly all) graduates of the respective programs at EMPA, and an "*orquesta criolla*" ("native orchestra," the group's own term for their large ensemble) including several members who were senior students in the Falla program at the time of my research. I chose to focus on these groups partially because they are all roughly equivalent in age, and their members are mostly in a transitional phase between students and full-time professional dedication to music. It would have been possible to emphasize a group of EMPA graduates

[74] Among others, pianists Sonia Possetti, Julián Peralta, Pablo Fraguela, bandoneonists Pablo Mainetti and Marcelo Mercadante, and the members of the folklore-rock band Arbolito have all received significant critical and popular attention.

who have a more solidified professional musical identity, but as the Falla program was new enough not to have produced any graduates at the time of my research, I chose to select bands from EMPA who were roughly equivalent in terms of their musical and professional development to the Falla group in order to more fairly emphasize similarities and differences between the two programs. Furthermore, I believe that this transitional phase is a particularly opportune moment to study the ways that musicians shape their subject positions, aesthetic and ideological identities in the larger music culture, as the decisions they make about what, how, where, and why they play can define sharp differences in their professional trajectories.

All three of these bands have produced at least one album – all independently released – and perform regularly around Buenos Aires. I consider these recordings in my analysis of the bands' musical aesthetics and processes, but will also include information I gathered while attending (and, in the case of la Biyuya, performing in) their public concerts, observing rehearsals, and interviewing band members. I believe their studio recordings are fair representations of the closest these bands come to ideal performances, and thus represent effective musical "texts" for addressing these issues. But recordings alone are a poor indicator of process, of poetics, and of the level of variability in musical performance that are intrinsic to these groups' approaches to music making, and wherever possible I include perspectives drawn from these additional sources.

There is additionally the issue of audience, and of the ways that these groups choose to shape the public that they engage. In all three cases, the bands' choice of venues, stage presentation, and the media outlets they choose to engage are integrally linked to their understandings of their own roles as public musicians, and their concept of their own subject

positions relative to larger social institutions and spaces. I include in my conception of musical performance not only the musicians themselves, but audience behavior, the roles of the main players in concert or other venues, and forms of mediation that are all involved in the public creation and presentation of a sociomusical identity.

In the following sections I will first examine each band individually using the above criteria, discussing a representative performance context and analyzing a piece or pieces that I believe demonstrate key aspects of their approach to musical aesthetics. I then turn to a broader analysis of the convergences and divergences between these groups, and the ways that these groups of musicians have strategically both drawn from and worked against the dominant sociomusical habitus of the curricular programs from which they emerged. The Falla-based ensemble shows a greater affinity for "traditional" musical tropes, drawing heavily from a symbolic repertoire signifying an idealized rural identity, a desire to respect conventional forms and genres within *folklore* practice, and maintaining an entirely acoustic ensemble. The EMPA graduates, on the other hand, had far more pragmatic attitudes about the ludic and self-referential uses of technology, "foreign" musical influences, and theatrical approaches to performing, many of which they relate to their early experience in and continued enthusiasm for rock music, a genre that carries far less stigma at EMPA than at Falla. Despite these differences, however, I ultimately conclude that all three of these groups evince an interest in pursuing *música popular* that is ideologically in keeping with populist politics and opposed to the commercial mass culture industry. They do wish to have professional careers as musicians, but qualify their desire to see their music become more lucrative by prioritizing ideology and their own musical aesthetics over the potential for mass appeal.

La Biyuya in performance: Postmodern tango?

It is October 2006, and the five-piece tango band La Biyuya is backstage at the Teatro Roma, a large, proscenium-stage auditorium in Avellaneda frequently used for opera, symphonic, and theater productions as well as jazz, tango and other popular acts. Its faded and worn velvet seats and curtains suggest something of the grandeur that the theater must have had in earlier, more prosperous times. In the backstage area, the hallway is painted with the likenesses of some of the more well-known performers who graced the stage, including opera singer Enrico Caruso and tango icon Carlos Gardel.

La Biyuya, friends and collaborators in my master's fieldwork, had invited me back to sit in with them for the evening, playing cello on several arrangements and original songs that we had worked out several years before, and versions of which (without cello) they had recorded on their just-released second album, *Buenosairece.* This concert was to be the second full performance of material from the new album, after a concert several weeks before at the Sala A/B of the Teatro San Martín on Corrientes street in downtown Buenos Aires, an important state-funded venue for tango music.

We meet backstage to set up instruments and sound equipment, as well as a large screen and projector that will transmit video and images during the performance. One of the substitute percussionists, Santiago Varela, arranges his set-up, a sort of hybrid between a standard drum set and an assemblage of South American percussion instruments including an Afro-Peruvian *cajón,* a *candombe*-style *tamboril* barrel drum and a small *bombo* used like a mounted tom as well as a hi-hat and several cymbals. The second percussionist brought in a

set of Indian tablas which he would play on several pieces – these two musicians were substituting for the group's original percussionist, Eduardo Lastra, who was away in India for several months studying classical Hindustani percussion.

The other members of the group, guitarist Pablo "Colo" Dichiera, singer Marina Baigorria, bassist Pablo Vaira and flautist/clarinetist Pablo Marasco, joked amongst themselves while completing a sound check and setting up a large projector and screen that will display a series of digitally altered photographs and other images in concordance with the musical performance. A series of two juxtaposed photographs opens the show, and also comprises the front and back covers to their new CD, showing the same street corner in downtown Buenos Aires several decades apart. Because the recent photograph has been digitally altered to match the sepia tones of the original, only the traffic on the street gives an indication of which image is contemporaneous and which from (roughly) the same "Golden Age" period as much of the tango repertoire that the group reinterprets here (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Front and back covers to la Biyuya's album *Buenosairece*

The members of la Biyuya have from the start performed a self-consciously constructed relationship between their local identity as contemporary tango musicians and the history of the genre itself as a popular and populist musical *lingua franca.* None of the current members of la Biyuya grew up listening to tango, or even have parents who professed an interest in the genre. Rather, their first real initiation into tango as a cultural practice came at EMPA.[75] Like many of the EMPA students and faculty in the tango program, singer Marina Baigorria saw the generational break in tango's popularity (see Chapter 2) as an intentional erasure of popular culture by a succession of military dictatorships. For her, the choice to return to this historically local and popular genre, even within the relatively constructed atmosphere of a school curriculum, becomes an act of counter-hegemonic cultural salvage:

> The dictatorship in particular screwed up the country's culture.[76] It left a culture… [take for example] a guy like Homero Manzi, [Enrique Santos] Discépolo, writing these things…[77] I read things of Manzi's and say to myself "We lost this!" …The intention [behind the group] is to recover, a little, [from] that break. And we feel that tango is also [a way] to recover ourselves, to say who we are, you know? Who we are, because we lack an identity. (Baigorria 2003 p.c.)

Nowhere is the band's understanding of their own relationship to a re-imagined and re-performed sense of the past more clearly articulated than in a fragment of an original poem that Baigorria recites at the beginning of their first album:

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[75] Pablo Dichiera, the group's guitarist, did have one important extracurricular contact with tango before beginning his studies: although he was primarily a rock guitarist, his grandmother was an amateur tango singer who recruited him to accompany her in several public performances early on (Dichiera 2004 p.c.).

[76] "Particularmente la dictadura hizo bolsa a la cultura del país."

[77] Homero Manzi and Enrique Santos Discépolo (both 1901-1951) were two of the best-known tango lyricists of the Golden Age. But these choices of example also echo the EMPA tango curriculum's emphasis on a historical narrative particularly celebrating populist heroes: both Manzi's and Discépolo's lyrics are outstanding in their celebration of the common man and (particularly in the latter case) astute and deeply cynical criticism of the hypocrisy and moral vacuity of those in power. They were also both politically active, Manzi principally in the FORJA party and Discépolo as a radio voice of the Peronist party in the 1950s (Ferrer 1977, 393-395,543-547; Salas 2001, 145-170; Castro 1990, 235).

Sin querer y sin buscarlo
se nos viene encima un tango,
que nos abriga como el viejo saco del abuelo
que quedó apoliyándose en el placard.
Y ese olor a naftalina se fue yendo
cuando de tanto usarlo
lo hicimos nuestro.

Without wanting it, without looking for it
a tango came over us,
which blankets us like grandpa's old overcoat
which lay sleeping in the closet.
And that mothball smell went away
When, from wearing it so much
We made it our own.

Rather than an essentialized or uncritically "authentic" claim to a social and musical identity as tango musicians, the members of la Biyuya understand that identity to be actively constructed through repetitive and learned use. They recover and reinterpret lesser-known old tangos and archaic *lunfardo* slang, in effect linguistically and musically collapsing the distance between past and present. In fact, even the band's name is a part of this process; "Biyuya" is an old lunfardo term for spare change or a trifling amount of money, although the word has fallen far enough from use that the band members often find themselves explaining it in interviews or during performances.

Frederic Jameson has observed that the cultural logic of the postmodern is often characterized by an "omnipresent, omnivorous, and well-nigh libidinal historicism." For Jameson, this fascination with the past is a hallmark of the "collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style," an abandonment of the notion of individual and distinctive stylistic identity and the return to the local past as one more persona, one of many options from among "all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture" (Jameson 1991, 17-18). But rather than see the past as a repository of stylistic

distinction to be replicated in the present, for la Biyuya the repertoire and performance traditions of Golden Age tango are, just as much as contemporary local and global sounds and symbols, repurposed and re-contextualized in pursuit of an individual musical style; rather than merely replicating the past, their musical aesthetic is, if anything, based on a conflicted and self-aware contemporary relationship with that (re)constructed history.

Indeed, much of La Biyuya's music, lyrics, and stage presentation is a playful and idiosyncratic postmodern subversion, or even inversion, of the tropes of traditional tango. Their genre crossing between tango and rock, and occasionally *folklore,* works in all directions: while their electrified versions of Golden Age tangos brings a rock-influenced aesthetic approach to this material, they also bring a newly tanguero perspective to rock tunes. For example, on their second album they include a version of Bersuit Vergabarat's "El tiempo no para" which they reinterpret as a Piazzolla-inflected tango, and the lyric extracted from "Para quién canto yo entonces," a 1970s-era song penned by Charly García, which they transform into a *milonga sureña.*

In a reversal of contemporary tango groups' tendency to wear all black clothing, members of La Biyuya generally wear all white clothing onstage, and lead singer Marina further emphasizes this dramatic effect with white face paint, occasionally (as was the case during the Teatro Roma performance) accentuated with a *bindi* that, along with the use of the tabla and the incense that they occasionally burn onstage, is largely a result of their percussionist's interest in north Indian music and culture.

Figure 5.2: La Biyuya in performance[78]

Figure 5.3: Singer Marina Baigorria, in stage makeup and bindi

[78] Figures 5.2 and 5.3 are reproduced courtesy of Gonzalez-Casabene photography (www.gonzalez-casabene.com.ar).

Along with the attention to the visual aspects of their performance through coordinated use of clothing, makeup, and video projection, la Biyuya also has frequently taken advantage of performance contexts that have allowed them to interpolate levels of theatricality and extra-musical narrative into their concert performances. Both of their albums contain recited fragments of poems and other texts, which they occasionally perform onstage as well. For their debut performance of their first album, *El Cuento que Dios es argentino,* they designed an elaborate set piece to make the stage appear to be the inside of a bar, complete with tables, glasses and bottles, and a window to the "street" outside, from which the band members and other guest musicians would enter and exit during the performance. On different occasions they have integrated other performing groups, including a troupe of puppeteers and the carnival dancing, drumming, and theatrical recitations of a local *murga* group.[79] Guitarist Pablo Dichiera explained to me that one of the origins of the group's interest in the theatrical elements of musical performance was his own fascination with the spectacle of heavy metal performing groups in the 1970s such as Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin (Dichiera 2003 p.c.). Dichiera himself began his musical career in a thrash metal band, before beginning his studies at EMPA.

La Biyuya balances this musical and cultural cosmopolitanism with a strong sense of their own music – and of tango generally – as productive of a communally experienced sense of locality. Their original lyrics, in the tradition of many tango poets, draw heavily upon both contemporary and archaic *lunfardo*, the local argot, and include references to neighborhoods and even individual characters from around Avellaneda. They cultivate a

[79] *Murga* is a form of popular theatre in the Río de la Plata region associated with carnival time involving, dance, parading, costumes, and songs on topical, often political topics, accompanied by bass drum, snare drum, and cymbal. See (Canale 2005).

micro-local public by performing monthly free concerts at a neighborhood mutual aid society a few blocks from the guitarists' house where they rehearse, and choosing to perform in lesser-known neighborhood cultural centers in addition to their higher profile performances on main stages in the city center. While musically and lyrically they demonstrate a deep knowledge of the historical tropes of the tango genre, they do not restrict themselves to mimetic reproduction of those tropes. Rather, by juxtaposing old styles and repertoires with modern, rock-influenced musical aesthetic and stage presence, and even postmodern, self-aware inversions of those tropes – conventions of dress, of gender, of instrumentation – they are making an argument for a re-historicized and local sense of the present. The past and the present are reflexively intertwined: new digital photos are sepia-toned, rock anthems from the 1980s are turned into tango, while old forms and songs are made new again.

Musical analysis: La Biyuya's "Buenosairece"

The album *Buenosairece,* taken as a whole, functions as a sort of musical journey toward and then ultimately away from Buenos Aires, from rural past to urban present to post-migratory nostalgia. The album opens with an original *milonga sureña* – a slow, often meditative piece associated with the pampas region, traditionally performed by solo guitar to accompany sung or recited poetry. Here, it is not the guitar but rather the electric bass that plays the traditional *bordoneo* accompaniment pattern at the opening (Fig 5.4), leaving the guitar free to play slow, melodic chords. Atmospheric cymbal and other percussion effects eventually give way to a simple tabla ostinato, reinforcing the 3+3+2 subdivision of the milonga rhythm.

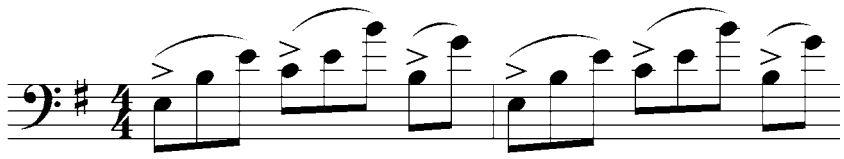

Figure 5.4: *bordoneo* pattern as played on electric bass, "¿Para quién canto yo entonces?"

The text, recited dramatically in a manner that is meant to invoke similar milongas by Atahualpa Yupanqui, comes not from a traditional source but rather the lyrics to a song originally performed in the 1970s by rock trio Sui Generis, "Para quién canto yo entonces" ("Who, then, do I sing for?"). The middle of the album consists of a mixture of older and original tangos, urban milongas[80] and valses that celebrate or, more frequently lament, aspects of the quotidian experience of life in Buenos Aires. The title track of the album actually personifies the city itself, coining a verb (*Buenosairecer*), to encompass all the myriad wrongs that the amoral and relentless city inflicts upon its residents.

"Buenosairece"	"Buenosairece"
Aleja alegrías,	[It] sends away happiness,
Contagia tristezas.	infects with sadness..
Desgarra la vida	[It] rips up the life
en manos ajenas.	in other peoples' hands.
Destroza el coraje,	[It] smashes up courage,
se alquila en monedas.	Nickels-and-dimes you.
Se vive, se llora,	It's lived, it's wept,
se vuelve y se deja.	It comes back and is left.
Despide violencia,	[It] exudes violence,
explota exigencias.	exploits peoples' needs.
Se arrima a la muerte	Death sneaks up on you
en cualquier vereda.	on any old sidewalk.

[80] Unlike the *milonga sureña* ("southern milonga," also called the *milonga campera* or rural milonga), the urban milonga (*milonga ciudadana*) is a parallel tradition of lively dance music, generally played by tango ensembles. They share a rhythmic base in the habanera rhythm, although the urban version frequently plays the whole rhythm while the rural version emphasizes the 3+3+2 accents as notated above.

Se cubre de miedos,	You cover up in fears,
se ahoga en sus deudas.	drown in your debts.
Se insulta, se escupe,	You're insulted, spat upon,
Se *afana* y se trepa.	Ripped off and climbed over.
Este maldito Buenos Aires,	This damned Buenos Aires,
se devora la consciencia.	It devours your conscience.
Se mastica a su hermano	It chews up its own brother
por llevarse otro pedazo	just to take home another piece
de la mísera existencia	of this miserable existence
que lejana nos sentencia	which, from far off, sentences us
a que la muerte con paciencia	to a death that patiently
nos regale otra ilusión.	gives us another illusion.

This style of philosophical complaint, cynical while simultaneously lamenting the need for cynicism, is a quintessential element of tango lyrics known locally by the verb *mufarse*. As Julie Taylor explains, the tango narrator is perhaps the best-known embodiment of this activity, who "is an essentially sensitive and vulnerable being in a life that forces him to cover up these qualities with the façade of the experienced, polished, suave, and clever man of the world" (Taylor 1998, 5).

Taylor's use of the male gender exclusively is an accurate portrayal of historical tendencies; lyric-writing, composition, singing and instrumental performance of the tango were overwhelmingly male-dominated fields until quite recently. Marina's active participation in the composition and arranging duties of the band (she is listed as sole author of the music and lyrics of "Buenosairece," although like all of the group's recent work this arrangement was worked out collectively), as well as serving as its sole interlocutor with the public during their stage performances indicate some of the ways that la Biyuya reflect a changing power dynamic in tango gender relations.

Musically, "Buenosairece" also reflects both a deep familiarity with the idiomatic conventions of traditional tango, while at the same time unapologetically moving beyond them, juxtaposing and interpolating elements from other stylistic influences. Even the instrumentation of the ensemble, emphasizing the flute as a primary melodic instrument while avoiding the iconic bandoneón altogether, frequently draws comment in the press and from audience members as a salient characteristic that signals their desire to re-imagine the traditional tango sound.[81] In fact, by the time of my research the band members had grown tired enough of fielding audience questions about the lack of the bandoneón in their group that they occasionally joked about borrowing one to leave onstage during performances as a taunting visual representation of audience expectations which, in a Beckett-esque move, would never be fulfilled. While the group does not use the bandoneón, the instrument's distinct phrasing and articulation are often invoked in Pablo Marasco's flute and clarinet playing, particularly in the aggressive ways that he attacks single notes and, as in the excerpt below, clips the ends of notes coming off of a slur.

This latter phrasing technique is also replicated by a rather unusual addition to the band's instrumentation on "Buenosairece:" in the opening phrases of the song Marina Baigorria plays a melodica, an instrument that was enjoying a modest upswing in popularity among EMPA students during my fieldwork period due partly to rocksteady and other older Jamaican popular music coming into vogue, and partly to its relatively low cost. Underneath the melodica's bandoneón-like melody and a flute descant, the electric bass maintain a

[81] Their use of the flute is not, of course, without precedents in tango. In fact, it preceded the bandoneón as one of the primary melodic instruments during the first decades of tango's emergence in the late nineteenth century. With the advent of the bandoneón and the growth of ensemble size during the first decades of the twentieth century its popularity was soon eclipsed, however. See (Martino 2008, 91-92) for a brief overview of the instrument's importance in the development of the genre.

constant quarter-note ostinato, a stock accompanimental figure tango musicians call "marcando en cuatro" (marking in four) or "marcato" (Salgán 2001, 46; Peralta 2008, 56), a rhythmic texture the guitar thickens with frequent syncopated accents (see Figure 5.5).

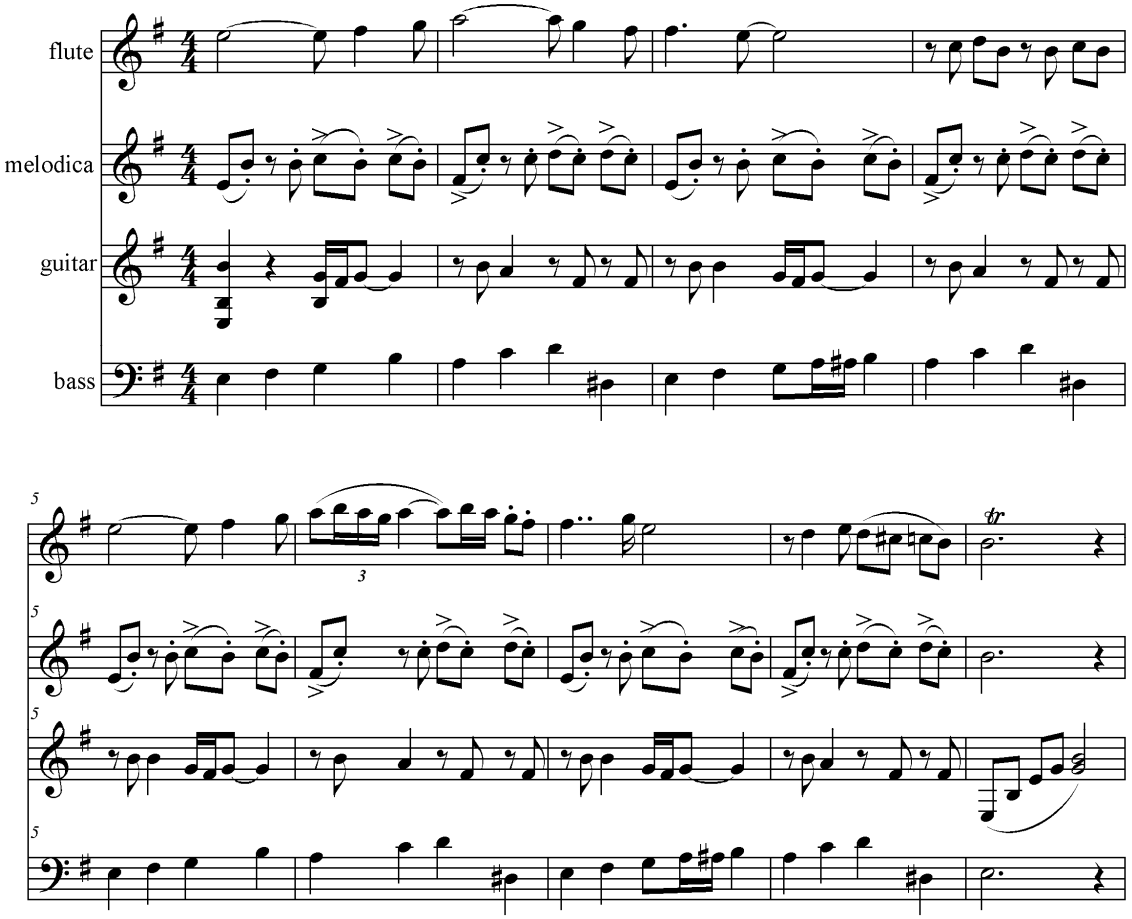

Figure 5.5: Introduction to La Biyuya's "Buenosairece"

"Buenosairece," despite the instrumental peculiarities of this group, is solidly within the tradition of *tango canción* – sung tango, where the text, and its expression through "natural," if dramatic, prosody, are of fundamental importance, and the music serves mainly as accompaniment. The instrumental accompaniment maintains a relatively metronomic

sense of tempo and rhythm, while the vocalist maintains more freedom to declaim the text with a rubato *fraseo* mimicking local patterns of speech-like prosody (Pelinski 2000, 41).

While the group clearly makes full use of the visual and theatrical elements of performance when they play for live audiences, they also evince a contemporary approach toward the use of mediation in their recordings. "Buenosairece" begins and ends with a sonic framing which calls the listener's attention to the process of recording and mediation: the track opens with the sounds of a radio being tuned into a station where (presumably, the audio conceit suggests) the listener finds the beginning of the tango itself, with the voice of Pablo Dichiera counting off the introductory tempo. The piece closes with overdubbed, arrhythmic blasts of tone clusters from the melodica, suggesting a soundscape immediately recognizable to anyone who has spent a rush hour in Buenos Aires: the thick cacophony of impatient drivers blaring on horns in stopped traffic. In these, as in other interventions such as the faux-LP effect on "Rostros," la Biyuya demonstrates a pragmatic approach to understanding the sonic recording and live performance as categorically different aesthetic experiences, and exploits and calls attention to the artificiality of the disc.

This playful use of technology is one of the traits that la Biyuya shares with Zamacuco, a *folklore* band made up of their former classmates at the EMPA, and with whom they occasionally share performance dates. While the bands' audiences and social circles overlap, the performance contexts that the two bands generally seek out are quite different.

Zamacuco in performance: pan-Latin American *folklore,* by and for rockers

In November of 2006, the band Zamacuco, a six-piece *folklore* band that had its start as a practice ensemble in the EMPA program, gave a concert in the clubhouse of a Galician

cultural organization. Situated in a rather rundown building underneath the 25 de Mayo highway in the *barrio* of Constitución, the center has a large, gymnasium-like main room with an old proscenium stage at one end that had been set up with large stacks of loudspeakers, full stage lighting and instruments. The room filled with a young, abundantly pierced and tattooed crowd with a distinctly hipper and more aggressively countercultural feel than at the Biyuya concert a month before. The show, which was scheduled to begin at midnight, had been aggressively promoted by the band members and their manager, who have festooned walls along streets throughout Buenos Aires' southern *barrios* and no small number of city buses with homemade stickers and posters.

The poster art, designed specifically to promote this performance, features a simply hand-drawn chick in front and profile poses, mug-shot style in front of a ruler measuring its height. While there was no specific thematic reason for this design, being rather the independent creation of the band manager's graphic designer girlfriend and her self-described "punk" aesthetic, the band would later joke that it had been oddly prescient: the guerilla advertising campaign was successful enough that the club that night well exceeded capacity, and when the police showed up at four o'clock in the morning, they shut the event down and the resultant fine has effectively ended the center's use as a concert venue (Jalil 2007 p.c.).[82]

By one in the morning, the crowd was noticeably restless as the band had yet to appear and many had been availing themselves of the cheap and generously portioned wine and beer for sale. The distinct smell of marijuana arose from several discreet huddles

[82] In the wake of a tragic fire at an over-capacity nightclub in 2004 that resulted in the deaths of more than 200 young fans, Buenos Aires police have been increasingly vigilant in monitoring and enforcing building codes at concert venues.

scattered across the room. Finally, nearly an hour and a half after the advertised starting time, Zamacuco took the stage, the house lights dimmed, and they launched into "Te festejo," an original tune based on the Afro-Peruvian *festejo* rhythm. The amplification was overpowering in the booming acoustics of the square, hard-walled and tiled space. The performance aesthetic was far more in keeping with a typical rock concert than most *folklore* performances: a full set of theatrical lights allowed for frequent and dramatic lighting changes, occasionally including a fog machine. Maira Jalil, the lead singer, strutted and danced – until, in a clear departure from their rock roots, she picked up an accordion for a series of Colombian-style *cumbia* numbers. Unlike the cumbia, which nearly no one danced to, when the band moved into their repertoire more directly drawn from Argentine folk roots, particularly chacareras, many audience members danced the traditional, fixed choreography of turns, spins, and *zapateo* – vigorous shoe-stomping, tap-like figures – in pairs or lines.

While the overwhelming visual aesthetic, and approach to stage presentation as spectacle, is primarily rock-influenced, musically there is little (besides the volume level, which was uncharacteristically deafening in this particular venue) to suggest the musicians' early and continued fascination with that genre. Rather, the musicians display a familiarity with a wide breadth of Latin American popular music styles, ranging from Argentine criollo styles (zamba, chacarera, malambo*)* to the more indigenously-inflected genres of the Andean highlands (*huayno, huaylas*), Afro-Peruvian festejo and *landó,* Colombian cumbias and *porros*, and Afro-Cuban genres (*son, guaguancó*). Zamacuco's first album, *Que Terrezumba,* generally maintains the distinctions between these genres, each of which are performed with characteristic and idiomatic instrumentation and, where applicable, a formal arrangement of

verses and choruses that correspond to a fixed choreography.[83] Even here, there are some exceptions, however, including their arrangement of the chacarera "La añoradora," which will be discussed in depth below.

By the time of this performance, however, the band had begun to blur the boundaries between genres, taking a flexible approach to group composition where the entire gamut of the technical and expressive resources they had developed through in-depth study of different Latin American folk traditions was drawn upon, but the resultant compositions were often hybrid. "We've been moving away from [forms], on this album," guitarist Matías Jalil explained, "there's just one gato, the rest don't have a structure and are more just songs. It can be a little bit candombe, maybe a little festejo, a little bit of son, but it's in another format" (Jalíl 2007 p.c.). The group has also expanded its possible instrumentation to reflect this growing range of stylistic influences: Ariana Aldariz, principally a flautist, also doubles on quena (an instrument she studied as part of her coursework at EMPA) and the gaita which they use for pieces in the traditional Colombian cumbia and porro styles. Both of their percussionists at the time of their second recording, Diego Gandolfo and María Eugenia Gomez, play a variety of instruments from Afro-Peruvian cajón and cajita, Afro-Cuban tumbadoras, the bombo legüero traditional to criollo musical forms from the Argentine northwest, and an assortment of cymbals, bells, and shakers from a variety of traditions.

[83] Argentine criollo genres corresponding with specific dances for non-embracing couples, such as the chacarera and gato, generally have a formulaic number of introductory measures, a fixed syllabic and rhyme scheme organization of alternating verses and *estribillo* (refrain), and a fixed choreography that can be performed either in individual pairs or in groups, where couples face each other in two parallel lines. The zamba is an exception; while the musical formula is strict, the choreography is relatively free-form. For specific analysis of some of these representative genres, see (Aguilar 1991).

Musical analysis: Zamacuco's "La añoradora"

In order to emphasize the differences in the ways in which Zamacuco and Pura Muña conceive of and approach contemporary *folklore* as a genre, I have chosen as a case study to compare their arrangements of a well-known "standard" chacarera rather than emphasize original material from either group. The *chacarera trunca*[84] "La añoradora," or "The [chacarera of] longing," with music by Oscar "Cacho" Valles and lyrics by Victor Ledesma, is a quintessential product of the mass-mediated "folklore boom" of the late 1950s and 1960s. Ledesma, a native of the province of Santiago del Estero, composed a text suffused with nostalgia for a romanticized, local rural identity from his native department of Salavina. Like the *lunfardo* of tango lyrics, *folklore* lyrics often create a sense of locality and rootedness not only through the use of specific locally relevant place markers, but also through dialect and regional terms. In this transcription, those salient terms and regional phonetic alterations appear italicized:

Ahí *andoi*' medio perdido	Here I am, half lost
lejos de mi Salavina	far from my Salavina[85]
como yuyo que se muere	like a weed that dies
si no crece en las salinas.	If it doesn't grow in the salt flats.
Hay quien pudiera volverse	There are those who could return,
el *duende* y la *Salamanca*	The *duende* and the *Salamanca*[86]
ser el alma de las coplas	To be the soul of the *coplas*,
chacareras y vidalas.	Chacareras and vidalas[87]

[84] The *chacarera trunca* shares the same form, meter, and basic strumming patterns as the more standard chacarera, and is differentiated only by virtue of the metrical arrangement of its melody and harmonic changes. Standard chacarera melodies generally begin on an anacrusis and end each phrase on the downbeat, while chacareras truncas have melodic phrases that begin on the downbeat and end on weak beats, most typically the third quarter note of the measure.

[85] A department in the province of Santiago del Estero.

[86] The *duende* is a mythological, often malevolent spirit, who along with witches and other supernatural beings gather in *la Salamanca*, often portrayed as a cave, playing entrancing music that can entrap unsuspecting nocturnal travelers (Coluccio 1983, 178-179, 380-382).

[87] Three locally popular genres of *folklore*.

Andar por los carnavales y en las sendas *jumialeras* cantar medio *machadito* de *farra* por las trincheras.	Going to Carnaval, along the paths near Jumial [town], singing, half-drunk partying in a ditch.
(Estribillo) *Diosquierita* cuando muera que un viejito violinero me lo toque chacarera de mi pago salavinero.	(Refrain) Oh Lordy, when I die, let an old violin-playing man come play a chacarera for me From Salavina, my home town.
Uy *viditay* cuanta pena por no ver a mis paisanos el s*onckoy* quedó con ellos y allá me estará esperando.	Oh dear, how much pain from not seeing my countrymen my heart stayed with them And will be waiting for me there.
Recordandolo a mi *pago* por volver que no daría si apenitas lo que tengo son las añoranzas mías.	Remembering my homeland what I wouldn't give to go back if the only thing I have Are my own longings.
No hay como ir a Salavina a bailar la chacarera dicen los viejos *quichuistas* la trunca no es pa' cualquiera.	There's nothing like going to Salavina to dance the chacarera, As the old Quechua-speaking men say, The [chacarera] trunca is not/ for just anyone.

Although suffused with musical and linguistic indexes of a romanticized, rural *santiagueño* identity, "La añoradora" itself is not an artifact of that tradition, but rather a result of mass mediation and the rural-to-urban internal migration that characterized the cultural shift in Argentina in the mid-to-late 1940s. The nostalgia for a small town in Santiago, one that likely saw a large part of its working-age population leave for urban centers looking for work, clearly spoke to the experiences of many displaced Argentines, and the celebration of indigenous cultural heritage through use of Quechua terms (*sonckoy, machadito*) and rural musical forms became one of the ways in which mass-mediated "*folklore*" sought to

interpellate this new migrant audience,[88] who often felt systematically excluded from symbolic representations of nationhood in tango and other urban musics (to say nothing of their systematic exclusion from means of production, political power, and other resources).

Musically, too, "La añoradora" was created in the urban center as a post hoc, constructed reflection of a rural identity. The composer, Oscar "Cacho" Valles was born in the well-to-do Buenos Aires *barrio* of Belgrano in 1924 and was one of the founding member of los Cantores de Quilla Huasi, a popular, traditionalist *folklore* ensemble during the "boom" of the 1950s and 1960s (Portorrico 1997, 238-239).

Formally, it is a textbook chacarera trunca: the text consists of seven *coplas* – quatrains of octosyllabic lines in an *abcb* rhyme scheme – the fourth of which serves as the *estribillo*, or refrain, repeated at the end and melodically distinct from the others.
In between each of the verses, and preceding the first, are six- or twelve-bar interludes, traditionally played on the violin or another accompanying melodic instrument, which unlike the vocal melody are not necessarily fixed parts of the composition, but are often re-composed or improvised by performers (Aguilar 1991, 118-121).

In this case, the band's arrangement begins rather conventionally, with the nylon-string guitar playing simple variations on the standard *rasgueo* (strumming) pattern over the tonic and dominant chord (Figure 5.6) marking the bi-metric rhythmic arrangement where the pitchless, high-frequency *chasquidos* (muted accents on the top strings, indicated here with slashed note heads) emphasize the 6/8 meter, while the strummed lower strings emphasize

[88] Following Pablo Vila, I use the term "interpellate" here in the Althusserian sense of hailing or identifying and in turn causing processes of identification, of and by a subject (Vila 1991).

the second and third quarter notes of the ¾ measure.[89] Since this is a chacarera trunca, on phrase endings (every two measures, in the opening) the harmonic rhythm is "truncated" – or more exactly, moved ahead – so that the tonic appears on beat 3, rather than the second eighth note of the following measure where it would occur in a standard chacarera.

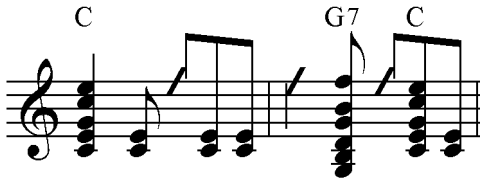

Figure 5.6: Basic chacarera trunca strumming pattern

The introduction proper begins with the addition of a simple flute melody (Figure 5.7) over this established harmonic and rhythmic groove. Other than the instrumentation – one percussionist plays a supporting rhythm on mostly-closed hi-hats rather than the traditional bombo legüero – there is little to suggest that this will be anything but a strictly conventional interpretation of the tune.

The first three verses and the estribillo follow the standard chacarera form precisely, while the instrumental accompaniment and melodic interludes between verses are subtly altered. The interludes are variations upon the original melody played by the flute, and both the electric bass, while the second verse is accompanied not by the unbroken strumming pattern but only a series of syncopated accents performed in rhythmic unison by all the instruments, while the third verse is accompanied much like the first with the addition of an elaborate flute countermelody.

[89] The rolled chord on the downbeat is only played open in introductions; otherwise it is played as a chasguido as in the second measure of the figure. This schematic is the most standard of the strumming patterns for chacarera, but competent guitarists seldom play this or any one pattern without variation for any period of time. Students in the EMPA folklore guitar program learn (at least) a series of five basic *rasgueos* for chacarera in the second year of the program (Burucuá 1994). In this recording, the guitarist, Matías Jalil, draws from all of these as well as other variations.

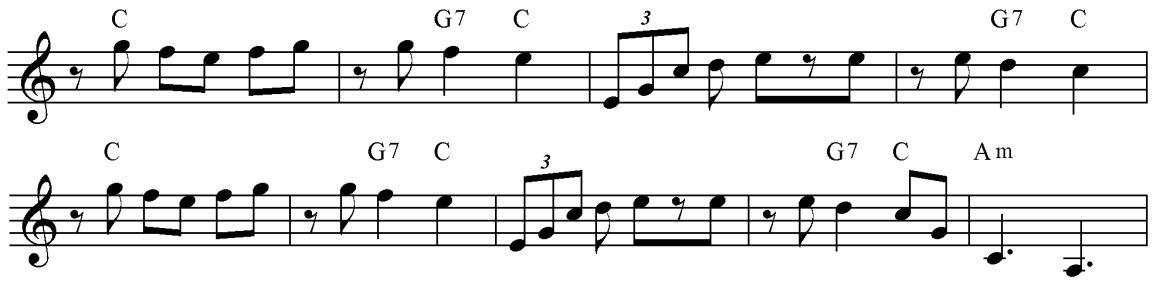

Figure 5.7 Original flute melody from introduction to "La añoradora"

These changes in harmony, ornamentation of the flute melody, and the accompaniment to the vocal verses are typical of the elaborate arrangements that students create and perform in the *folklore* curriculum at both schools. In a typical guitarreada or other informal performance context, or in a band that plays typically for dance-oriented peñas, strophic repetition with no more variation than the new text for each verse would be perfectly acceptable. Zamacuco's efforts to avoid such simple repetition in their arrangements – and in this regard this piece is representative of their approach more generally– suggest the extent to which the band expects and idealizes performance settings where attentive listening is privileged.

The real innovations and divergences from standard practice in Zamacuco's version of this chacarera, however, begin following the estribillo. Where a more conventional arrangement would mark this formal division with a slight pause, the dancers would retreat to their original positions, and the second half would be marked by a call of "*segunda,*" the metric flow is disrupted by the electric bass, playing in a new tempo and meter. Without any other instrument for reference, it is not until the two percussionists join in on Afro-Cuban instruments that it becomes clear that this rhythm is in fact the anticipated bass line of a Cuban-style *son*, supported by the standard *tumbao* on congas and the *cáscara* rhythm, played

in this case on a modified drum set rather than the traditional timbales, and the son clave rhythm played on cowbell by foot pedal by the drum set player (Gandolfo 2009 p.c.).

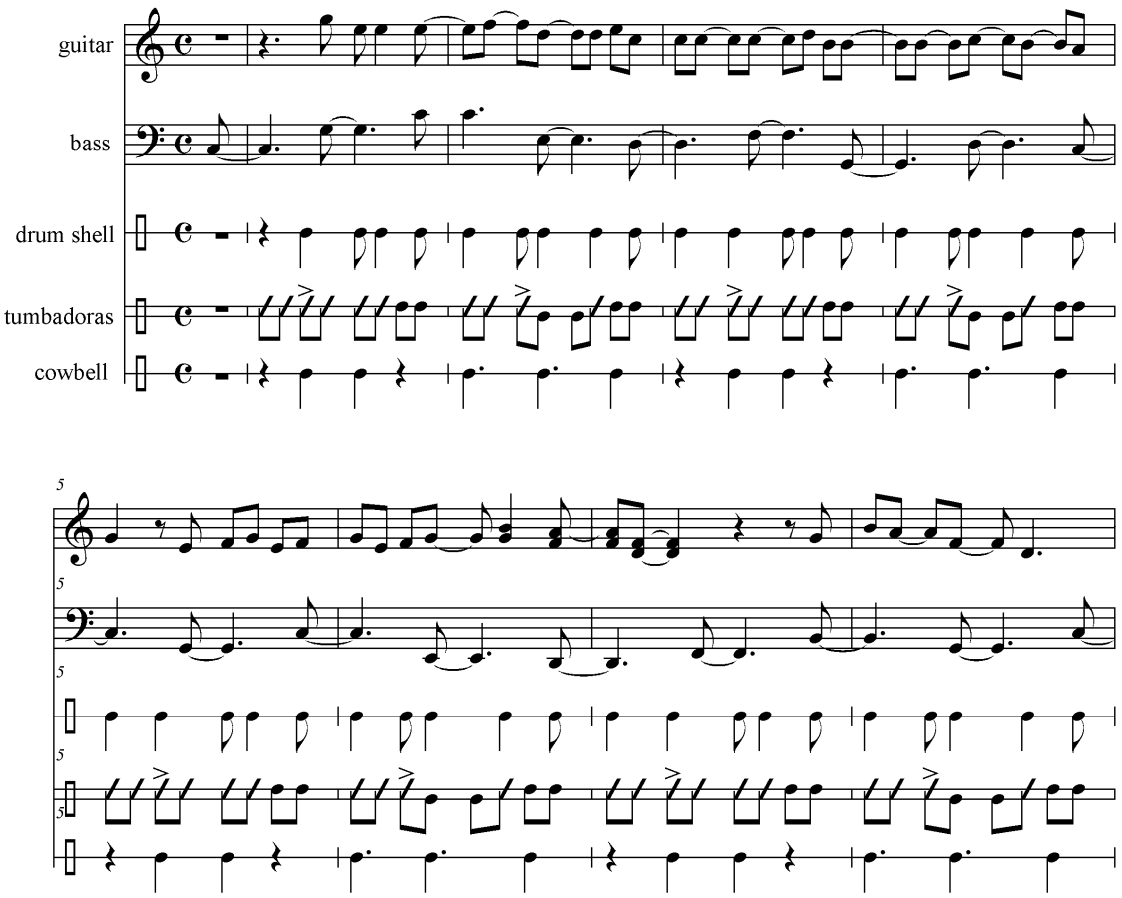

Figure 5.8: *son* section with guitar solo, Zamacuco's "La añoradora"

Once the *son* rhythm has been established, first the guitarist and then the flautist each take an extended improvised solo (see Figure 5.8 for a transcription of the son accompaniment pattern and beginning of the guitar solo). This kind of free melodic improvisation is not typical to conventional folklore performance, but due to the cross-genre grounding in jazz that all EMPA students undergo in their first year in the Ciclo Superior (advanced program), regardless of eventual specialization, it is an ability that many EMPA

folklore students develop, both in school ensembles and their own projects. The EMPA *folklore* curriculum includes mandatory performance ensemble classes both in "written arrangements" and, the following year, in "spontaneous arrangements," where these abilities are developed.

This marks an importance difference between the EMPA and Falla folklore programs, and one that extends beyond the curricular content; I did not observe any such approaches to music-making in the Falla students' outside musical projects. I observed a particularly telling indicator of this difference in performances, in November 2006 and August 2008 respectively, of the folklore ensembles from EMPA and the Falla program. The same professor, Lilián Saba, directs both ensembles and writes all of the arrangements. In this case, both ensembles played very similar arrangements of the same piece, the malambo "Toda la pampa" by Oscar Alem – the only significant difference being that the version Saba created for the EMPA ensemble had an open vamp on a two-chord riff in the middle of the piece, over which a *quena* player and then a pianist performed jazz-inflected improvised solos. While such a practice would be quite unusual in a traditional approach to this repertoire, Saba placed it there quite pragmatically. "There were these kids who could really play jazz, so I thought 'Why not?'" (Saba 2007 p.c.).

The cross-genre interlude continues through two other stylistic changes in rhythm and meter before returning to the chacarera form: first, a reassertion of the 6/8 meter where the earlier cáscara pattern is transformed into the "more chacarera-like" rhythm that audiences and dancers often clap between verses (Gandolfo 2009 p.c.) over which the guitar and flute exchange four-measure improvised solos (see Figure 5.9).

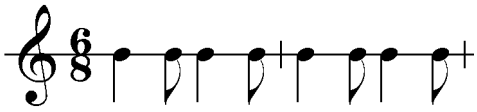

Figure 5.9 "Chacarera-like" cáscara pattern

This section is followed by one of the only incidences where Zamacuco draws on musical source material from beyond Latin America, and the difference in their approach deserves further comment. The percussionists first establish a 12/8 polymetric pattern between three tumbadoras and a bell that the group's percussionist Diego Gandolfo, described as an "adaptation of an African pattern called Dunum that, (according to… [the] EMPA professor that taught it to me) is used as the base for accompaniment of various rhythms in the northwestern part of Africa: Mali-Guinea-Burkina Faso...I used it because I thought it went well with the chacarera!" (Gandolfo 2009 p.c.). Over this pattern, the lead singer and the rest of the band, serving as chorus, establish a call-and response phrase that flautist Ariana Aldariz explained as "a kind of a joke; unlike what we try to do with other things, here we didn't research anything, we just copied a song that [singer] Mai had, and we changed a few parts of the lyric to the word 'Zamacuco'" (Aldariz 2009 p.c.). After repeating this pattern twice, the call half of the call-and-response drops out, and the lead singer layers over this texture the fourth verse of the chacarera with the original vocal melody, marking the return to the second half of the original form (Figure 5.10)

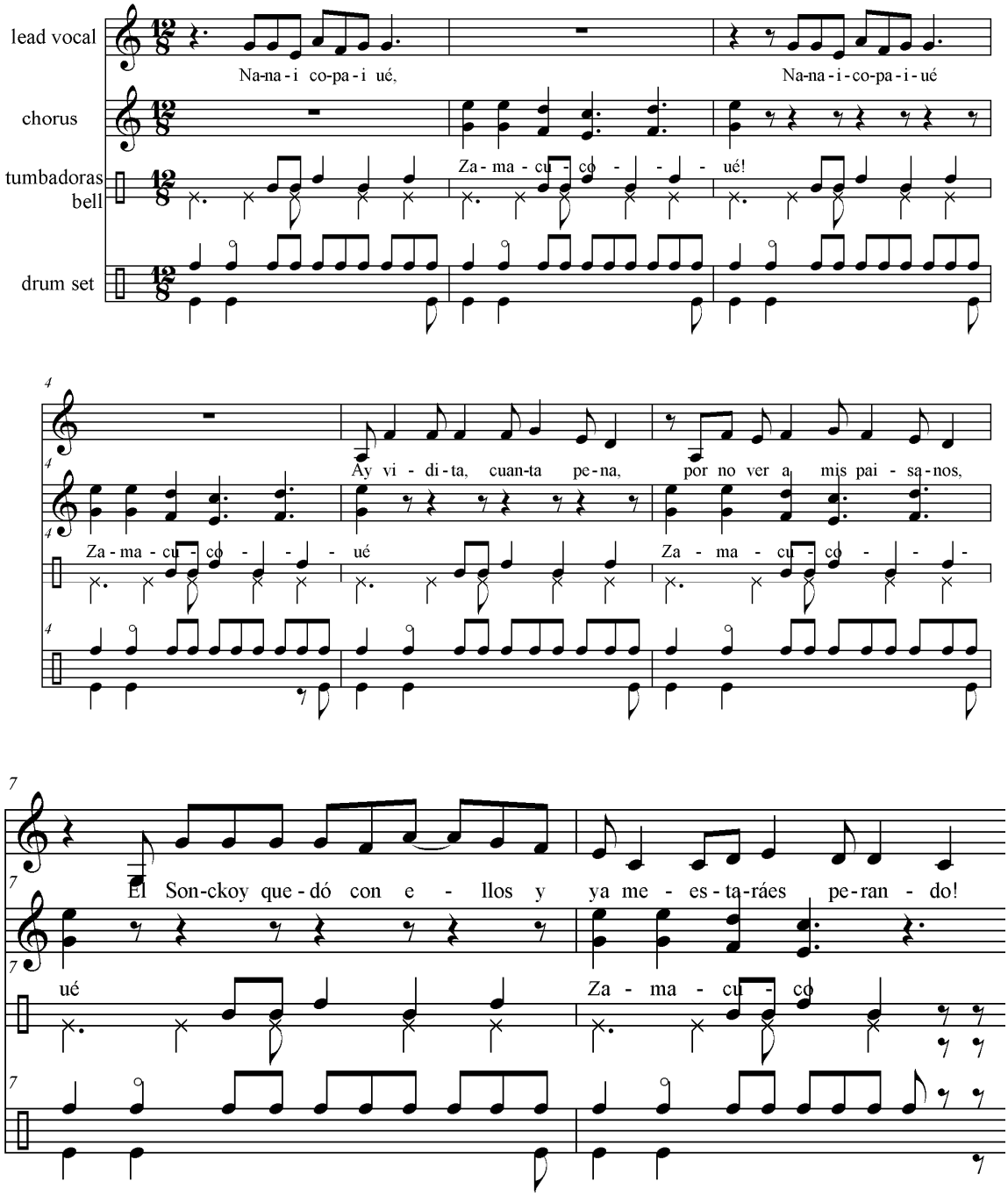

Figure 5.10: "Dunum" rhythm transition back into chacarera form

The members of Zamacuco have, as Ariana mentions, made an extended and in-depth study of most of the Latin American musical genre that they play or draw from. This

study began at EMPA, where professor Toro Stafforini's two-semester class on the popular musics of Latin America served as the first introduction for many of the band members to the musics of the Andes, afro-Peru, Colombia, and other sources that they would later study independently in greater depth. Several of the members have traveled repeatedly to northwest Argentina and Bolivia to study Andean genres and instruments in their original context, and in Buenos Aires as a group they have taken lessons in both the dances (*huaylas*) and instruments (the Colombian *gaita*) that they eventually have incorporated into their own original compositions. But with the exception of the percussionists (who study with a teacher who specializes in Afro-Cuban styles and, as indicated above, introduces students to at least some West-African-derived material) EMPA students do not generally study music from outside of Latin America. In this sense, their interest in West African source material is similar to their classmates' use of tabla in tango orchestration: it is more a product of a musical cosmopolitanism sparked by global "world music" than a result of a deeper engagement in, and identification with, specific local popular music cultures.

Pura Muña in performance: an urban peña

In July of 2007, the Orquesta Criolla Pura Muña played a peña at the Giribone, a house that functioned as an artists' cooperative and community cultural center in the quiet Buenos Aires neighborhood of Colegiales. The Giribone, named for the street on which it was located, served as a home base for the ensemble; they held all of their rehearsals there, several of the members taught instrument lessons out of the house, and most importantly, they organized frequent peñas at the event where they would share the "stage" (in reality, just a cleared corner of what was formerly a large living room, now equipped with a modest

light and sound setup) with other invited *folklore* groups. Admission for these events was very modest, no more than five pesos (less than two dollars), and they tended to attract a young crowd of students, artists, and other bohemians. The artists' cooperative supplemented the small take at the door by making large batches of filling, inexpensive traditional peña foods – this particular night brought a lentil stew and the obligatory beef empanadas – and selling portions, along with cups of wine decanted from large *damajuana* jugs, out of the house's kitchen. A pair of dance teachers also associated with the cultural center offered free classes in the folkloric dance forms before the event, but they were sparsely attended; while I chatted with several of the musicians from the ensemble I watched only one couple try to work their way with some difficulty through the slow and elegantly flirtatious steps of a zamba.

By the time the performance begins around midnight, as it turns out there is no room for dancing in any case. The room is full of a young and lively crowd of around seventy, many of whom seem to know at least one of the ensemble members. It is logical that the performance seems to have attracted mostly a crowd of regulars who know the venue and the group well –neither the band nor the venue put much effort into advertising their performances beyond photocopied flyers distributed by hand to friends and acquaintances, and the digital equivalent of announcing performance dates on their Myspace page. Audience members good-naturedly stand close together, making what room they can, and are generally quiet and attentive as the music begins, clapping enthusiastically between songs. Despite this attentive silence, the atmosphere is relaxed, and people pass freely between the room where the performance takes place and the outer hall, where others linger chatting over bowls of stew, half-listening through the doorway.

Pura Muña´s repertoire is a much broader range of mostly Argentine folkloric styles than many modern *folklore* ensembles. Dance genres originally from the northwestern provinces of Santiago del Estero and Tucumán, have long enjoyed a hegemonic status in the mass-mediated *folklore* created and disseminated primarily from the capital, a process that began as early as the staged productions of Andrés Chazarreta in the 1920s (see Chapter 2). Two of these genres in particular have become overwhelmingly dominant since the folklore boom of the 1960s: the chacarera, which is easily the most widely known and performed dance genre, and the zamba, which while originally a partnered *danza de pañuelo* (handkerchief dance) derived from the Peruvian *zamacueca* is today often performed as a slower and more meditative piece where audience behavior is more likely to involve passive listening. Juan Falú, introducing the zamba in the Forms and Rhythms of Folklore class for first-year students in the Falla program, explained that "many times, early in the evening when people want to dance, you´ll see a lot of chacarera, gato, in the peñas. When it gets late, everyone´s had a lot of wine, and wants to listen …people sit close and the zambas come out" (Falú 2007). In practice, this was precisely the process that happened at the semester-end *guitarreada* in the Falla described in the introduction.

While Pura Muña performs both of these genres, as well as the related *gato* and *bailecito*,[90] but they also perform, and compose original music, in other criollo genres from other parts of the country – like the *cueca* and *tonada*, from the Cuyo region – from more directly indigenous sources – such as the *huayno* and *sanjuanito* – and even a genre seldom performed in

[90] The gato and bailecito, also both genres from the northwest, are very similar to the chacarera. Their rhythmic arrangement and idiomatic *rasgueo* patterns are largely interchangeable; the distinctions between them draw largely from the formal arrangement – number of verses and estribillos, and the related formal organization of dance steps, which are performed in different orders and numbers in each genre but otherwise look much the same.

Argentina, the duple-meter *takirari*, originally from Bolivia. Because the dances accompanying many of these genres are not nearly as widely known among the *porteño* audiences as the always popular chacarera, there is frequently a fair amount of differentiation as to the level of audience participation as the group moves from genre to genre over the course of a set. While space considerations kept the audience at the Giribone peña I attended from dancing, this was not always the case at Pura Muña performances. I witnessed several of the group´s performances at a quasi-official peñas organized by students of the Falla program a month earlier where the crowd enthusiastically danced chacareras and gatos in long parallel lines that converged and crossed with the choreography (see Figure 5.11) There was even little difficulty assembling a quorum to dance lesser-known choreographies such as the *cueca cuyana* and *estilo*; since Falla students are required to study folkloric dance forms as part of the curriculum an audience of students of *folklore* forms provided perhaps the ideal symbiotic counterpart for this ensemble.

Figure 5.11 Lines of students dancing chacarera at a Falla conservatory peña[91]

The ensemble formation itself is a unique recombination of elements of rural expressive culture refracted through the lens of an urban and cosmopolitan subjectivity. As cellist Solana Biderman explains, the idea for an *orquesta criolla* was itself an alteration of one of the standard tango ensembles of the Golden Age period, the *orquesta típica*:[92]

> We met in the Giribone [house]…a few at a time. There were Karina and José, who were in the [Orquesta Típica] la Imperial (a professional tango orchestra), violinists, and I don't know when it came up, in one of the peñas there at the Giribone, that we have to make an orquesta. I don't know, one of those things between drunks…[that] we have to make like an orquesta típica, but for *folklore*, because all of us that were there, we came more or less from [playing] *folklore*. I suppose that those two, because they were in an orquesta, maybe they saw it more.. I don't know, maybe they imagined it more. I was there, Andrea [a guitarist] was there too, and another violinist that later left the group, and just like that, we made up a section of violins,

[91] Photo by Julia McReynolds.
[92] The most common instrumentation for *orquestas típicas* involves 3-5 violins, 3-5 bandoneones, a cello, piano, and double bass. For variants and historical development see (Sierra 1985).

> and instead of a section of bandoneones, we had a section of guitars, a cello, and on charango we had Aldana, who you know. In the beginning the idea was also to add a double bass and a piano.[93] That is, just like an *orquesta típica* but using guitars instead of bandoneones (Biderman 2007 p.c.).

But unlike Zamacuco, who embrace the hybrid nature of their ensemble, blending genres, instrumentation, and stylistic influences from rock and from popular musics from across the Americas, Pura Muña aims at an aesthetic and a sociomusical identity more informed by an idealized notion of the rural popular than at hybridity for its own sake. If anything, their urban conservatory training is a liability to be explained rather than an advantage to be exploited.

The band's Myspace page – as intentional a social presentation of a public identity as one could hope for – contains, along with sound samples from their self-titled album and announcements about upcoming tour dates, two large blocks of text, each of which in different ways try to address the paradoxes inherent the notion of conservatory-trained urban musicians creating an orchestra dedicated to rural folk music. The first of these, by Daniel Bazán Lazarte, a relative of one of the ensemble's guitarists, is something of a paean to both the rural lifeways and landscape and canonic and near-canonic *folklore* composers and poets that the group claims as their principal influences:

> There is a history behind [us], an undeniable root, an immense root, like a pitcher infinitely full of rubies that show us the way: Rubies [like Atahualpa] Yupanqui, [Armando] Tejada Gómez, [Osvaldo] Pugliese, the Nuñez brothers, "Chivo" Valladares, "Cuchi" Leguizamón, Manuel Castilla, [Alfredo] Zitarrosa, Ramón Navarro, etc. And from closer to home: Chacho Echenique, Juan Falú, Jorge Fandermole, etc. etc. From there we've flowed, revising, salvaging, incorporating, in order to then propose new sounds, new forms…there is a path in front of us, too, and that's where we're headed, wanting for us, too, to tell, with our own poetics and our own musical way,

[93] In 2008, the group did add a double bassist to its ranks, but the piano never materialized. Since this addition happened after my field research and the recording analyzed below, I omit it from the rest of this discussion.

> so that *folklore* doesn't calmly let itself be affected by those intermediaries from the market who believe themselves to be its only owners, and who tie it to a supposedly singular way [of doing things]. That's why we've traveled all these different paths, the valley brings us and mixes us in a permanent dialogue with the landscape and its people. The music comes out of those life experiences. From that "Conversatory,"[94] sometimes with the river, sometimes with the mountain, sometimes with the plains, and more than anything, again with the people, their pains and loves, music grows…"

Besides the explicit acknowledgement of Juan Falú as one of the "rubies" who have guided their project, there are several other aspects of this artistic manifesto that suggest a strong degree of influence from the Falla program. The naturalized relationship they describe between a soundscape, a landscape, and its people – an understanding of *folklore*, whether new or old, as fundamentally autochthonous – is entirely consistent with this teaching. So is the tendency to position themselves against "intermediaries" serving the mass culture industry, instead arguing that even as urban, formally trained musicians their efforts to maintain lines of communication with rural peoples and musicians (in fact, many of the ensemble members do travel regularly to the Argentine northwest to learn and play music) affords them a more genuine subject position from which to "propose new sounds [and] new forms."

While the diction of this artistic declaration of purpose is somewhat florid, it is nothing compared with the whimsical rhetorical flourishes of the other text that appears on the page, which one suspects is intended to function something like the back-of-the-book blurb by a well-known scholar asserting a younger author's bona fides. Mariano Barrionuevo, a musician from Tucumán who is also associated with the Giribone arts house,

[94] i.e. "*Conversatorio,"* a portmanteau based on the words for "conservatory" and "to converse."

recognizes the oddity and divergence from tradition that such a large ensemble represents, but ultimately concludes that the project is a valid one:

> I assure you that I never saw nor heard anything like it, and that, one way or another, I was waiting for it. Speaking, of course, of within *música popular argentina*, and setting aside the tango and its typical *orquestas*. I do remember anecdotes, heard from mouths anxious to be listened to, about old-time *orquestas criollas*, Chazarreta's for example,[95] which –so they say – went from here to there, playing and compiling. I don't dare to imagine the sound, since when I imagined that of my contemporary and still-breathing friends, I, as they say, came up with any old thing. Yes, I must recognize that I underestimated their purity when I was told about them. The bad habit, I assume, of being from Tucumán [province], or, so that no compatriot of mine is offended, the bad habit of being me. One afternoon, from the kitchen of the Giribone [house], I could hear, while drinking a few *mates*, a rehearsal of the Muños.[96] As they started arriving, one or two at a time, I thought about how complicated it must be to put together a rehearsal schedule. How daring, I said to myself…there are eleven of these crazy guys…and like that, as I listened to them tune up the *filas* (rows), as I think they call the violins, I saw a stick already floating in the mate, confirming the blandness of the concoction, an enormous respect for the size of this musical adventure began to take hold of my insides… I stayed there, in silence, listening to what made it through after having passed through the door and the cold outside. In one of the breaks, typical of a rehearsal, I allowed myself to discuss among the myselves with whom I share a shadow, until a *tonada*[97] began that made us also share our surprise. The word "beautiful" fell from my mouth, which softly opened in a smile of ineludible enjoyment… and with the excuse of serving them a few *mates*, I went in to the rehearsal room. The repertoire took me through Argentina, and carried me all the way to Bolivia, smiling the whole way…I poured myself a mate, and asked the *bombisto*[98] what the *yerba*[99] had that tasted so good. "The same thing as the orquesta," he said, "a lot of *muña*."[100]

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[95] Andrés Chazarreta, director of the first national folkloric music and dance troupe (see Chapter 2).
[96] i.e. members of Pura Muña.
[97] A slow song genre from the Cuyo region.
[98] i.e. bombo player; using a masculine ending rather than the conventional *–ista* suffix for instrumentalists is a vernacular hypercorrection typical of the Argentine northwest.
[99] *Yerba mate* is the dried leaves of the *Ilex paraguariensis* bush used to prepare the infusion called mate. In some areas, other herbs or plants are added to the mate, such as, in this case, *muña muña*.
[100] Me animo a asegurar que no vi ni oí nada parecido y que, de un modo u otro lo estaba esperando, hablando por supuesto, dentro de la música popular argentina, obviando al tango y sus típicas orquestas. Recuerdo si, anécdotas oídas de bocas ávidas por ser escuchadas, sobre antiguas orquestas criollas, la de Chazarreta por ejemplo, la que… andaba deambulando de aquí para allá tocando y recopilando. No me animo a imaginar aquel sonido, ya que cuando imaginé el de mis contemporáneos amigos de ágil circulación sanguínea, hice, como se dice, cualquiera. Sí, debo reconocer que subestimé a los purísimos cuando me hablaron de ellos. La mala

The percussionist's allusion is to the *muña muña* plant from which the orquesta takes its name – a medicinal herb (*Satureja parvifolia*) native to the highlands of the Argentine northwest and used there among other purposes, as an aphrodisiac – its name is derived from the Quechua word for love, *munay*. The plant is not widely known in Buenos Aires; the liner notes to the band's eponymous album provide the plant's taxonomic classification and a brief definition for the benefit of their urban audiences. I believe that the band's choice of the *muña muña* as namesake serves a dual function: it allows them to demonstrate a piece of the cultural capital that they have accumulated through study (musical and otherwise; at least one band member is studying Quechua to fulfill her language requirement in the Falla program) of the region often understood as the wellspring of the rural traditions from which contemporary Argentine *folklore* draws, staking a claim to partial ownership of, and participation in, that cultural heritage. But there is also an element of winking humor in the ways that the band deploys this sign; the percussionist who jokes that the band itself might possess some of this mystical potency, and even their decision to incorporate the herb in clearly non-medicinal ways into the quotidian ritual of the mid-rehearsal communal mate – an experience as

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costumbre, asumo, de ser tucumano, o, para que ningún coterráneo se ofenda, la mala costumbre de ser yo. Una siesta, desde la cocina de Giribone, pude oír, tomando unos mates, un ensayo de los Muños. Mientras iban llegando, de a uno o de a dos, pensaba en lo complicado de combinar un horario de ensayo: Osados, decía para mis adentros...son 11 estos locos… y así, mientras escuchaba afinar a las filas, como creo que le dicen a los violines, y veía flotar ya un palo en el mate que me confirmaba lo desabrido del brebaje, un enorme respeto por tamaña aventura musical comenzaba a afincarse en mis adentros…me quedé ahí, callado, escuchando lo que llegaba después de atravesar la puerta que nos separaba y el frió que hacia. En las detenciones, típicas de un ensayo, me permitía discutir con los yo con quienes comparto sombra, hasta que empezó una tonada nos hizo compartir también el asombro. La palabra lindo se me caía de la boca, que se abría suavemente en sonrisa de gozo ineludible... y con la excusa de cebarles unos mates, ingresé al habitáculo destinado al ensayo. El repertorio me paseó por Argentina y me llevo hasta Bolivia, todo el viaje sonriendo…. Me cebé un mate y le pregunte al bombisto qué tenía la yerba que sabía tan rico, "lo mismo que la orquesta", me contestó, "mucha muña."

unremarkable as a coffee break for Argentine musicians – suggest at least some critical distance from this same set of cultural beliefs and practices.

Musical analysis: Pura Muña's "La añoradora"

Logically, as a group whose performances are often meant to engage a public who participates through dance, Pura Muña´s musical aesthetics and poetics take into account the specific boundaries that this context places on innovation and divergence. Most importantly, since nearly all of the dance genres they play involve a fixed choreography that corresponds to a specific musical form, Pura Muña demonstrates far less interest in breaking from these traditional formal structures (*pace* their own manifesto's claim to "propose new forms"). In this regard, the influence of the Falla curriculum, and particular of Juan Falú, who I observed repeatedly emphasize that these formal structures ought to be sacrosanct for aspiring *folklore* musicians, was quite significant. Guitarist Andrea Bazán, a member of Pura Muña and Falla student, explained her own tendency toward following these formal conventions:

> MO: To what extent do you think [your tendency to respect traditional formal designs] is an influence from the Falla program?
>
> AB: It could have something to do [with it], it could be. Juan [Falú] gets on your case about it and you say, okay. You do it because your professor says so. But for me, I find it really interesting to explore that all the way…and then afterwards see if I can find other ways of breaking with things, those structures, that work, that doesn´t seem bad to me either. But, I don´t know about for the others, but for me I like to respect [forms]. Maybe because I don´t feel like doing other things, sometimes I sort of take it to heart. Maybe in the Orquesta [Pura Muña], somebody wants to put in an extra measure, and you know, I´ll say "No, man, no no no!"[101] (Bazán p.c. 2007).

[101] AB: Puede tener que ver, por a mí en particular, puede ser que si, Juan te hincha las pelotas y vos decís, bueno, sí. Lo hacés porque tu profesor te lo dice. Pero a mí me resulta interesante explorar a full eso… después si encuentro otra forma de romper las cosas, esas estructuras que esté buena, no me parece mal tampoco. Pero no sé los demás, a mí particularmente me gusta respetarlo. Pero por ahí porque no me animo a hacer otra cosa.

This is a marked difference, as seen above, from the approach taken at the EMPA and, frequently, by EMPA-trained musicians like the members of Zamacuco, and serves to demonstrate the extent to which the aesthetic codes of academic *música popular* have not yet been entirely solidified and canonized. While I do not mean to suggest too strongly that institutional, curricular strictures in this sense necessarily determine the approach that their graduates take in their own projects, it is striking how closely the attitudes vis à vis formal conventions in folkloric genres mirror those of the creators of these two curricula. In a 2005 roundtable debate about the state of folklore and Argentine culture, a music student asked Juan Falú and Manolo Juárez – the main creators of the Falla and EMPA *folklore* curricula, respectively – whether they believed that students ought to be taught to respect the formal conventions of folkloric genres:

> MJ: No. The primitive compositions by the foremost collector of our folklore, Andrés Chazarreta, do not have pre-established forms, which were adopted as a general rule. [To do so] would be to deny formal freedom, and that would be a barbarity.
>
> JF: These forms, that have been preserved, reveal two important possibilities: that of being creative from within them, and that of being able to rely on a [musical] idiom…The challenge is always to have the greatest freedom; but sometimes not knowing any model to restrict oneself to produces, especially in young people, that they do not know what to do with them. One has to know the forms, and then let everyone do what they want with them" (Pedroso 2007, 110).

In the case of "La añoradora," Pura Muña's arrangement follows the formal structures exactly; the guitars establish a standard chacarera rasgueo pattern, following which the violins play an original, eight-measure introductory melody (Figure 5.12). Much like in the

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Si a veces, yo lo tomo medio a pecho. Por ahí en la orquesta, alguna quiere poner un compás de más y ya, viste, digo no, no, no, loco, no!

orquestas típicas on which the *orquesta criolla* was modeled, the violins are frequently used as a section, playing homophonically and in rhythmic unison, filling out the vertical harmonies either in parallel thirds or sixths, a convention common to Argentine *música criolla* and much of the Spanish-derived folk musics of Latin America, or by leaping between chord tones as is common in section writing for tango orchestras.

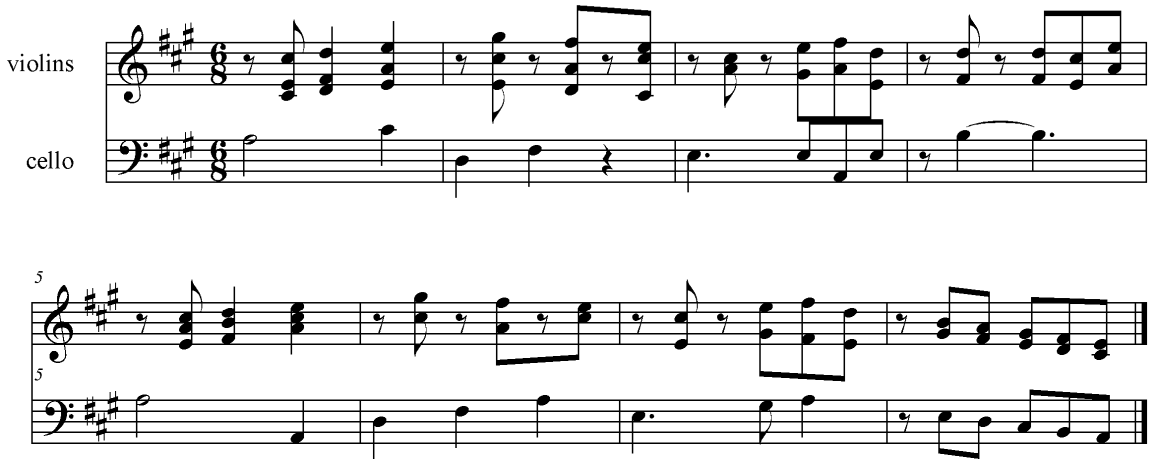


Figure 5.12: String section introduction to Pura Muña's "La añoradora"

The cello is either used as an additional, lower voice in the violin section or independently. In this introduction, it alternates between these functions, at times (mm. 4, 8) moving in rhythmic unison with the violins, and at others arpeggiating the underlying harmony, but emphasizing the 3/4 pulse over the 6/8, in effect doubling the rhythmic function of the *bordones* (the lower strings of the guitar in the rasgueo pattern). Solana Biderman, the cellist for the group, explained that the resultant rhythmic sense, which is slightly "heavier," is one of the main aesthetic perspectives that she has adopted from studying with Juan Falú at Falla. But like her bandmate Andrea Bazán, she is careful to

articulate that Falú communicates this preference not in terms of dogma, but rather personal choice:

> I think that more than drawing lines in the sand, [Juan Falú] contributes values… He always talks about the low notes, the weight of the low notes in the rasguido rhythm, like that's being lost in the more mainstream *folklore*, from the festivals..that the weight of the low notes is lost, in order to make it more danceable, and that yes, moving people like that is a question of losing depth...as if that were more fun. He values that [i.e. playing the low notes with weight] a lot. But from there one can do what one wants, too. But yes, for me that's more like a value. To value and respect that (Biderman 2007 p.c.).

Beyond her direct acknowledgment of Falú's influence in questions of musical aesthetics, there are two further aspects in Solana's discursive framing of this issue which are consistent with the ethos of *música popular* aesthetics as practiced within the Falla. First, her reluctance to make dogmatic pronouncements about musical aesthetic, preferring to cede to individual choice, directly echo those of Falú himself, quoted above, who even while stressing the importance of *knowing* traditional forms, offers that once musicians have mastered this knowledge, they should "do whatever they want with them." Second, her tacit bifurcation of *folklore* into "mainstream" folklore – that is, the version of that music most supported by the music industry and national media, often through festivals such as the National Folklore Festival held in Cosquín every year, which she criticizes for abandoning "profundity" in favor of lively and danceable tempos – and the folklore that Pura Muña and like-minded groups produce, which (even though dancing is an integral part of most of their audience experiences) also preserves a space for careful, attentive listening and contemplation.

There are other aspects of Pura Muña's arrangement that also suggest that their idealized performance context is one that privileges – in fact, depends upon – a relatively silent and attentive audience. Unlike Zamacuco and La Biyuya, Pura Muña's instrumentation is entirely acoustic, and at times instruments with very little projection play important melodic roles. For example, in their version of "La añoradora," a variation on the original, instrumental interlude melody –played by the flute in Zamacuco's version (see Figure 5.7) appears in between the first and second verses in Pura Muña's arrangement, played only by the charango. The second half of the chacarera form (i.e. beginning after the first appearance of the estribillo) replaces the vocal part altogether until the final estribillo, first by a single plucked guitar playing in its upper register, and then by the charango, delicate textures that would have difficulty being heard in a large venue or by a loud and distracted audience.

Convergences/divergences

This tendency to favor acoustic, more intimate arrangements and instrumentations is one that I saw consistently in groups made up of Falla students, and much more rarely from groups more closely related to the EMPA. In fact, this distinction even holds within the curricular ensembles at each institution. At the EMPA, of course, some of the tendency toward louder ensembles featuring more amplified instruments may be at least partially a result of the environmental competition; rehearsal rooms are poorly insulated for sound and groups must compete not only with each other but also with traffic noise from the busy street below and frequently loud electronic dance music from the gymnasium on the ground floor of their school building. The Falla conservatory annex where the folklore and tango

department held their classes until 2008 was, while centrally located in the business district of Buenos Aires, several floors above traffic and classes were spaced far enough apart that students and teachers had little difficulty focusing on the music in their own classroom.

But I do not think that these differences in volume level are related only to the exigencies of the spaces in which students learn. At the Falla, Juan Falú often lamented the lack of attention to, and value of silence in urban spaces as one of his primary frustrations in adapting to life in the capital. His *tucumano* accent was both slower, softer, and included more pauses than many of his *porteño* students. Musically, the solo guitar introductions to *zambas* and other contemplative pieces that he asked students to sing in class often made ample use of silence and sonic spaces. In constructing an identity as *folklore* musicians within (and to some extent, against) the city, largely dependent upon the rural imaginary as communicated through sound, Falla students were taught to value and create sonic spaces of intimacy and silence, a practice that many of these students seem to have carried beyond the classroom into their own extracurricular musical activities.

While EMPA *folklore* students were taught to respect the rural origins of the musical styles they studied, there was little emphasis on replicating those idealized lifeways or soundscapes within the classroom; instead ensemble leaders like Juancho Farias Gómez embraced a thoroughly modern and urban approach to those same musical styles, encouraging the use of electric guitars and even requiring students whose own training had been exclusively on nylon-stringed acoustic instruments to learn the new instrument (Alvarez 2007 p.c.). In fact, the *folklore* department's willingness to embrace rock aesthetics and practices was one of the things that attracted many EMPA students who entered the school interested primarily in rock music to ultimately choose *folklore* as their specialty. One

of the members of Zamacuco observed, "Coming from [a] rock [background] there's this idea that you're going to study jazz, and then in the Escuela [de música popular] the *folklore* people are more *rockeros* than the jazz folks, and the jazz folks are like the squarest in the school" (Aldariz 2007 p.c.).

These differing attitudes toward technology and sound reproduction technology were not restricted to instrumentation: both EMPA bands examined in this chapter demonstrate an interest in ludic experimentation with the full capacity of digital recording and reproduction technologies as expressive resources in their own right, such as la Biyuya's sonic framing of "Buenosairece" with simulated traffic jams and radio static, and Zamacuco's use of distortion filters for the guitar and voice, and even a "hidden" track at the end of their first album, a techno-style remix of samples from their other songs.

The musicians of Pura Muña, while certainly familiar with digital recording technology, used it solely as a more efficient means of recording and distribution, including the independent recording and production of their eponymous album and their promotion efforts through their Myspace page and blog. The aesthetic they embrace in these digital media is strictly mimesis of the live acoustic aesthetic, which is consistent with a sonic imaginary of an organic rural music culture.

There are several ways in which all three of these bands share consistent understandings of both musical praxis and the relationship between *música popular* and the public it engenders and constructs. In terms of musical process, it is clear that the emphasis both schools place on blurring the boundary between composer and performer, requiring all students to assert their own aesthetic subjectivity as arrangers and composers as well as singers and instrumentalists, and conversely using instrumental performance as a vehicle for

composition and arranging, have enabled these former students to develop comprehensive abilities in all of these areas.

Furthermore, all of these musicians have embraced the process of arranging, and in some cases composition, as a collective rather than individual experience All three of these ensembles credit the entire band for the arrangements on their albums, and in practice often work out new arrangements in rehearsal without written parts or, in some cases, a single notated melody line and chord symbols, through which each instrumentalist is responsible for creating his or her own part (Jalil 2007, Dichiera 2006, Biderman 2007 p.c.). In this regard, particularly for the two bands made up of former EMPA members, the musicians' informal prior experience in rock bands may have had more to do with their developing this particular creative method than their academic training (Pissolito 2007 p.c.; see also (Green 2001) although the EMPA curriculum also develops these skills. *Folklore* students' ensemble classes include a semester emphasizing "spontaneous [group] arrangements" while tango students learn to play *a la parrilla,* or creating ensemble arrangements without recourse to written notation. In some of the *lenguaje musical* (music theory) classes, as well, teachers emphasize performance and creating recordings, rather than notation, as the desirable end result of assignments in arranging or composing in determined styles (Cantore 2008, 17). Certainly these experiences would have built these musicians' confidence in creating aurally and orally. Members of both Zamacuco and la Biyuya reported experiencing a growing comfort with and confidence in this form of working over time; on la Biyuya's first album many of the arrangements included partially or completely written out parts for all of the instruments, but over time they have moved toward group, unwritten compositional praxis. Maira Jalil and Ariana Aldariz of Zamacuco reflected that the intra-group dynamic of

experimentation during the period in which a new arrangement is being generated has developed over a period of years of working together.

> MJ: In fact, the songs are transformed, from what they were before to what they end up becoming. The last arrangement that we did….reflects a bit of all those years we have worked together, putting together arrangements. Where there's this super playful thing where everyone can try whatever occurs to them, and feel the freedom to do it, just try it out, just as if they were at home trying things out…it seems easy but there's a whole process of being able to gain the confidence of the others and make an arrangement [together] based largely on this playfulness.
>
> AA: That freedom for me is really fundamental. We've got years [together] as a group, and …maybe you'll try something out, just toss it out there, but you know that everybody else isn't going to say "*che,* you're going to play *that?* You can toss out whatever, and the others have confidence that you're going to organize something [eventually]" (Aldariz 2007, Jalil 2007 p.c.).

The ludic and spontaneous process that these musicians describe reinforces the notion that for *música popular* musicians, the distinction between composing, arranging, and improvising is at least occasionally indeterminate, much like the ways that those same processes problematize the distinction between composers and performers.

Perhaps the most significant convergence between these groups, however, is in the similar ways that they seek to create a public identity as popular musicians that in many ways replicate the same tensions between institutionality and counterhegemonic possibility that were so prevalent in the schools. Here, the main structures of power with which the groups intersect are not governmental, but rather those of the capitalist culture industry. Just as teachers and students within the schools wished to benefit from the stability and credibility that formal a formal academic institution (at least theoretically) could confer without sacrificing the musical and political ideals to which they ascribed, all three of these bands

want simultaneously for their music to be financially and professionally viable, and yet not compromise their ideological and aesthetic sense of its value.

In the introduction, I discussed several reasons why a monolithic model of the capitalist culture industry fails to address the dynamic relationship between capital and music, both as a product and a process, in Argentina. At a practical level, two fundamental changes in recent years have altered the ways that musicians locally can seek to earn a living from recordings: first, widespread piracy has, like in many places, grossly limited the extent to which commercially produced recordings can function as a substantial income source on a wide scale. Second, the increasing availability and decreasing cost of digital recording technology have made home studios, or small studio recording and independent production a far more accessible option for many musicians, particularly those working in less commercially popular genres or who have not yet established a wide degree of fame.

All three of the groups discussed in this chapter recorded and released their albums independently, in relatively small numbers, and sell them mostly in person at their own concerts or at small local record stores. This has provided them with a modest income beyond their initial costs – the musicians in all of these bands supplement their performing and recording careers with work as music teachers, instrument makers, or other income – but as one of these musicians joked with me, gesturing to her own shelves full of copied CDs, "nobody *buys* albums anymore." Nonetheless, these independently produced albums do pose several benefits to the musicians beyond the creative freedom that they enjoy to work unrestrained by market or recording label intermediaries. In effect, these albums serve as an important source of cultural capital that can be instrumental in securing performing engagements, particularly at the relatively well-funded municipal, provincial, and

independent cultural centers that cater to this emergent, "counterhegemonic" sort of *música popular*.

For it is this choice of venues, and the concomitant choice of public they wish to engage, that some of the most curious contradictions between the "popular" and the institutional begin to emerge. Some of the most consistent spaces where the students and teachers from these academies, and the musicians whom they admire and follow, find support for their music are in this set of cultural centers. Some of them, like the Centro Cultural de la Cooperación and the Teatro Luz y Fuerza (both of which have hosted la Biyuya) were originally run by socialist or leftist labor organizations, and espouse an openly culturally leftist agendas, although they are not currently formally associated with any political party. Others are run by the municipal or other local governments. In either case, these venues tend to have capacities of less than two hundred, charge a very modest fee or nothing at all for entry, and attract audiences that, despite the low cost tend to skew middle class and educated.

The two EMPA groups, at least, have also had a modest degree of entrée into local radio outlets. The radio airspace in Buenos Aires is much like the space for physical music venues: the largest and most dominant are devoted almost exclusively to rock and pop. *Cumbia* also is particularly prevalent, particularly in dance halls in the working-class *barrios* on the outskirts of the city, but it is held in low esteem by the middle classes and generally stigmatized, so it does not garner the same degree of support on commercial radio. There are one tango and one *folklore* radio station in the city, both of which are government-run and have playlists that tend to favor older and more traditional fare, although they do both play some more contemporary artists including Zamacuco and la Biyuya. They have also

been guests on the general-interest Radio las Madres, a not-for-profit station run by the human rights organization Madres de la Plaza de Mayo. They are members of AADI, the national association for performers, and thus collect royalties for all of this airplay. Thus far, this amount has been rather insignificant – less than one hundred dollars per year – but the further publicity and cultural capital that come with airplay on the major tango and folklore stations have also certainly assisted them in securing more performances. None of these bands are (yet) securing well-paying enough performances, or large enough audiences, to generate all of their income from performing with these groups. Most of these musicians are also employed teaching music either privately or through local schools, or in other areas related to their musical interests (instrument making and repair, working at the National Academy of tango, etc).

Despite having an interest in increasing their earnings from performing, all of these groups also actively seek out poorer-paying or free engagements in support of political causes they agree with. Zamacuco, for example, has played engagements at the cultural center situated at the Escuela de la Mecánica de la Armada, a former clandestine detention center during the dictatorship that has since been reclaimed by human rights groups, and recently at a "counter-festival" in support of indigenous cultural movements protesting the "Día de la Raza" (Columbus Day). Pura Muña has played at events supporting the *cartoneros* – self-employed cardboard collectors and recyclers – and la Biyuya, as mentioned above, maintains a regular schedule of free concerts at a local mutual aid society.

Meanwhile, as I established above, this notion of "popular" music does not, for these musicians, entail a musical aesthetic that is necessarily massively accessible. All three of these groups traffic in semiotic practices, from archaic slang to little-known folk genres,

that demonstrate the depth of their own study, and are not readily (entirely) accessible to an uneducated audience of contemporary urban Argentines. Nonetheless, the overriding attitude in all three groups' approach, one that is conveyed through stage presence and banter, album art, and public performance, is a ludic one, where the reconstitution and recombination of disparate musical elements serves to revalorize a notion of the popular, even if the musical codes themselves are at times complex. In the following chapter, I will address the ways in which these musical and discursive strategies intersect with larger symbolic and material economies in the public field as a whole.

Chapter 6: *Música popular* in the field of cultural production

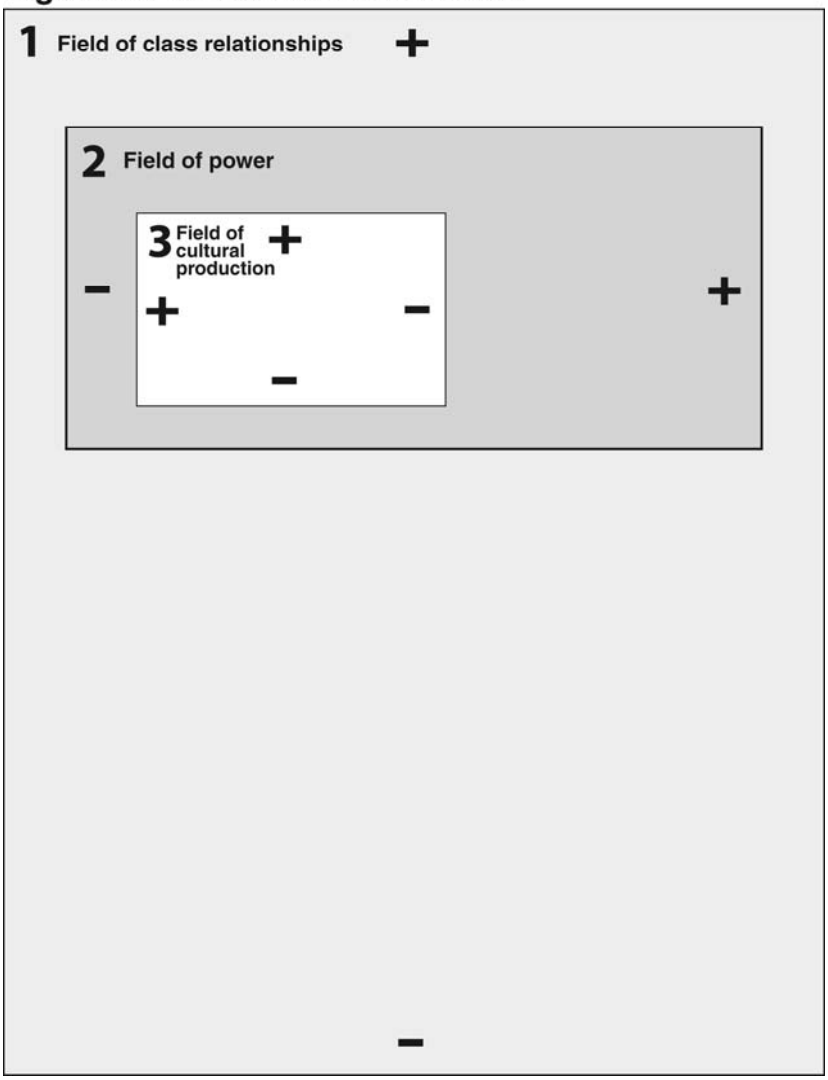
Broadly, the previous three chapters have presented an argument that moved from broad extra-institutional structural relationships of power, to the ways those relationships shape ideology and musical practice within the schools themselves and ultimately in their graduates' extracurricular and professional musical lives. By structuring my narrative in this way, I recognize that there is a potential for reading my analysis of the relationship between sociopolitical structures and sound structures in an overly deterministic manner. I do not mean to argue that musical aesthetics and poetics are entirely shaped by the political, educational, or economic forces that I have described in the previous chapters. Rather, I understand musical aesthetics and poetics, on one hand, and social, political, and economic structures on the other, to be dialectically engaged. Furthermore, as the discussion in Chapter 5 of various bands' divergent approaches to making and conceptualizing music, these schools' influence over their students' extracurricular and post-graduate musical activities is far from absolute or entirely homogenizing. Rather, I believe it is useful to conceptualize these institutional aesthetic approaches to music making as akin to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* – they provide a structure of possible strategies which musicians can choose to use, or diverge from, given the particular context and their individual interests, priorities, and idiosyncrasies.

In this chapter, however, I wish to step back from individual instances of musicians' practices to consider more broadly the relationship between *música popular*, as it is constructed and disciplined within these institutions, and the wider spheres of political,

educational, and economic interests that also shape it. Given the multiplicity of intersecting and often opposing interests in this subculture, I have sought out a conceptual model for this process that is dynamic and multidimensional. I find Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993) a useful tool for approaching this question. Bourdieu's model has some substantial limitations, particularly in its approach to popular and working-class art, and its failure to account for processes of mediation. Nonetheless, I believe that it provides a useful point of entry into an analysis of the conflicting spheres of interest. It is an approach that situates musicians' aesthetic processes within larger fields of power and economics without implying that they are entirely determined by these fields, and furthermore understands musicians' subject positions to be dynamically and relationally constituted within the wider cultural field in which they operate.

This chapter will begin, then, with a brief overview of Bourdieu's original concept of the field of cultural production, and a discussion of both its potential and its drawbacks in understanding the social processes of musical production in this context. I then briefly recapitulate the historical trajectory of the three principal genres that have come to constitute *música popular* within these schools, tracing their shifting positions within the field of cultural production up to the moment of the institutions' emergence. Most importantly, I then re-examine the role that institutionalization has played in constituting a new cultural space in the field for *música popular*. Particularly, I am interested in the ways that key players negotiate between "high culture" institutional forms, ideological assumptions about the respective roles of art and commerce, and populist political ideology. I then return to Bourdieu's model, suggesting ways that his original concept can be expanded and altered in order to better explain this particular set of dynamic relationships.

Figure 6.1 Bourdieu's fields model



Bourdieu's model of the field of cultural production

Randal Johnson has characterized Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production as a kind of "radical contextualization" (Johnson 1993, 9). Without resorting to the crude economic determinism of vulgar Marxist approaches to cultural analysis, it nonetheless seeks to situate works, cultural producers, and even entire genres or subcultures within a field of possible positions, analyzing the ways that particular aesthetic and poetic strategies intersect with, but are not entirely contingent upon, larger political, economic, and

other forces, each of which in turn constitutes its own field. These fields are hierarchically organized, with smaller fields (the field of power) entirely subsumed within larger fields (the field of class relations), yet individual fields maintain some degree of autonomy from the larger fields within which they exist.[102]

In a schematic diagram reproduced here as Figure 6.1, Bourdieu situated the field of cultural production (3) within the field of power (2) and in a dominated position within it. The field of power, in turn, occupies a dominant position within the larger field of class relations (1), and thus artists and other cultural producers occupy the economically dominated, but symbolically dominant portion of the dominant class.

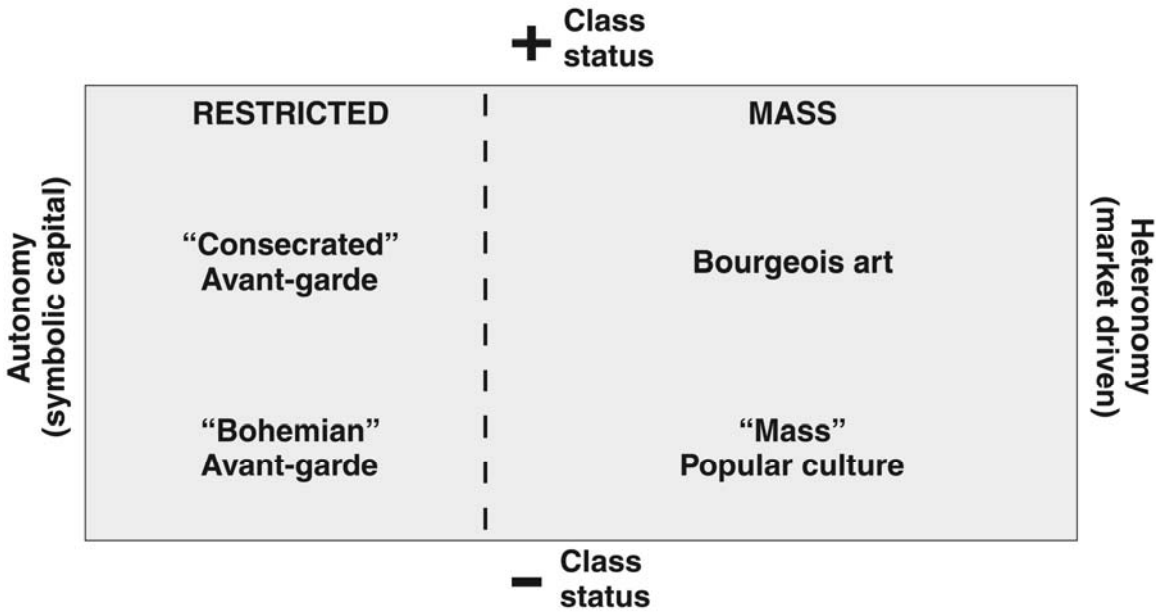
The field of cultural production itself as a whole, while contained within the field of power, enjoys a relative and variable degree of autonomy from it. That is to say, prestige and power within the field of cultural production, which Bourdieu terms 'symbolic capital', is not entirely dependent upon economic capital in the field of power. Individual cultural scenes, producers, or products may have greater or lesser degrees of autonomy from the economic field. That subset of cultural production that least values economic capital, and is most concerned with intra-group symbolic capital is termed the "subfield of restricted production." Traditionally in the cultural milieu of late 20th-century France that Bourdieu describes, this field comprises avant-garde "art for art's sake," whether of the already "consecrated" canon of high-culture heroes, or "bohemian" avant-garde subcultures that

[102] I find Bourdieu's nomenclature for this concept problematic. By "field of power," I understand Bourdieu to mean, roughly, a field constituted by those who wield some sort of conglomeration of cultural, political, and economic authority. Despite my misgivings with Bourdieu's term I replicate it here in order to more easily participate in the interdisciplinary debates over how these concepts can be applied.

have not attained, and often even reject, the symbolic capital that can lead to legitimization within the restricted subfield.

Closer to the negative pole of symbolic capital are those cultural products that Bourdieu calls more "heteronomous" – that is, their relative success is contingent more upon broad market appeal, and results in accruing greater economic capital. Moving from lower status positions in the field of power to higher, these form include "mass" popular culture and, in higher status positions, bourgeois art (See Figure 6.2). It is important to remember that, in Bourdieu's analysis, this entire field exists within the field of power, at the dominant end of the field of class relations.

Figure 6.2 Bourdieu's field of cultural production



Limitations/criticism of Bourdieu's model

By placing the field of cultural production entirely within the field of power, Bourdieu effectively negates the possibility of artists and other cultural producers from outside of the dominant social class. It is difficult to reconcile this notion with the panoply

of cultural practices and products that have emerged "from below" – from low-cost musical home production in "Cassette cultures" or more recent moves toward digital home studios (Manuel 1993) to "cartonera" or recycled-cardboard publishing houses (Pinkus and López 2007) to American rap in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Keyes 2002). I agree with Desmond Hesdmondhalgh that this serious oversight in Bourdieu's work probably stems from the lack of attention in Bourdieu's own research into processes of production at the "heteronomous" end of the cultural field, and to processes of mass-mediation more generally (Hesmondhalgh 2006, 217). For while works like *Distinction* are concerned with patterns of *consumption* among the economically dominated classes – and particularly with how they continue to serve the hegemonic concerns of the dominant class (Bourdieu 1984) – his work on cultural *production* is primarily concerned with elite culture, "high" and bourgeois art. As Hesmondhalgh reminds us, it is important not to confuse Bourdieu's concern for revealing the ideologies immanent in popular or mass culture with a celebratory cultural relativism; he is quite clear about his own suspicions about the value of heteronomous or market-driven cultural production in his *On Television and Journalism*:

> Today…the market is accepted more and more as a legitimate means of legitimation …Audience ratings impose the sales model on cultural products. But it is important to know that, historically, all of the cultural productions that I consider (and I'm not alone here, at least I hope not) the highest human products – math, poetry, literature, philosophy – were all produced against market imperatives (Bourdieu 1998, 27).

Despite Bourdieu's own suspicion of popular culture, other scholars have found that his field model, when adapted, can provide useful insights into popular and non-elite cultural practices. Most relevant to this discussion is Paul Lopes' analysis of modern jazz in the field of musical production. Lopes argues that modern jazz (by which he means principally the

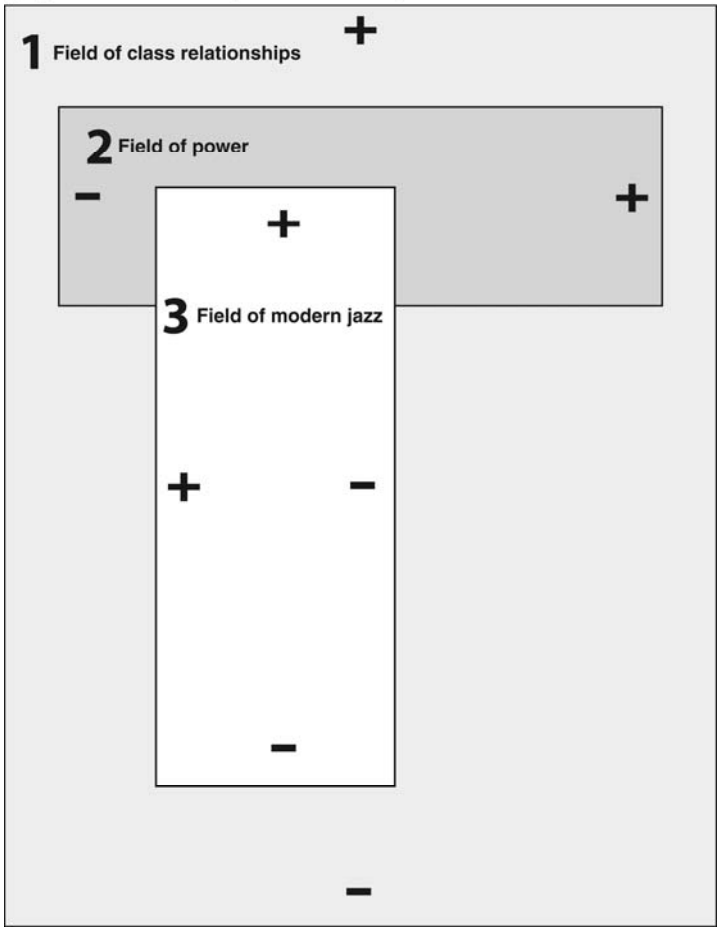
bop, post-bop and free jazz of the 1950s and 1960s – not coincidentally, I think, the same jazz that comprises the vast majority of the EMPA jazz curriculum) ought to be understood as neither elite autonomous art nor popular commercial art, and proposes as an alternative the notion of a restricted (i.e. autonomous and anti-commercial) subfield of popular art (Lopes 2000, 173).

According to Lopes, the turn toward discursively and musically constructing "modern jazz" as a distinct genre from mainstream commercial big-band jazz began when the recording industry systematically began to favor the "sweet," white bourgeois bands over the "hot" principally African-American bands during the 1920s. Access to greater means of generating economic capital through music was severely limited for African-American popular musicians; they could not become members of ASCAP to collect royalties for their compositions, and record labels and venues were similarly limited. In response, "modern jazz" as a distinct subculture embraced a turn toward an "anticommercial ideology and a stance against the 'popular' to legitimize their practices," which increasingly resembled those of "high" art, particularly in their demand for dedicated, concentrated listening (Lopes 2000, 175).

This new field retained some of the practices from popular, big-band jazz – primarily, the centrality of improvisation, which came to occupy even a more central role in these emerging aesthetics – while simultaneously disdaining the notion of popular commercial success. While these artists frequently embraced the notion of autonomous art and the composer/performer as hero (DeVeaux 1997, 13) in ways that replicated much of the nineteenth- century Romantic discourse about art music, they were not generally aspiring toward inclusion within the art music sphere. Rather, they developed a parallel and genre-

specific schema of competencies that functioned as cultural and symbolic capital within this new restricted popular subfield; musicians gained and lost prestige in public jam sessions and "cutting contests" through the display of technical virtuosity, improvisatory melodic and harmonic imaginativeness, and a thorough knowledge of the repertoire (Monson 1996, 183-184; Berliner 1994, 41-44). The semiotically rich improvisational practice demanded a high level of entrained performative competence not only of the musicians themselves, but also of the listeners, effectively making modern jazz a "music for musicians." This is one of the defining characteristics of Bourdieu's restricted subfield of cultural production: the restricted subfield produces for other cultural producers, while heteronomous genres of art produce for the non-producing masses, whether elite (i.e. bourgeois art) or proletarian (i.e. "mass" popular culture).

Figure 6.3 Lopes' restricted subfield of modern jazz (my schematic representation)



Contrary to dominant historical narratives that stress the role of conservatory-trained, middle class musicians in shaping this high-art discourse within the modern jazz movement, Lopes argues that key players in this field spanned a wide range of socioeconomic classes, and many of them had not undertaken formal music educations (Lopes 2000, 166). In order to represent Lopes' argument graphically, then, the restricted field of popular art (or at least that of modern jazz), would need to be extended beyond the upper end of the field of class relations, in order to encompass the broader range of class identities who participated in the field as producers (see Figure 6.3). As I will demonstrate in

the following section, I believe that a similar adjustment is appropriate in spatially conceptualizing the restricted field of *música popular* in Argentina.

Of course, in the United States it was precisely this turn toward a symbolic economy homologous to that of art music that made it possible for jazz to gradually gain entry into the conservatory system, where it now enjoys, if not parity with European classical music, than at least a near approximation with it in many programs. The primary means by which this was accomplished was by appealing to the ways in which modern jazz resembled the European high-art tradition: it required years of study to attain the necessary degree of virtuosity, it was complex enough to require education both for the player and the listener, and it was essentially commercially unviable (Ake 2002b; DeVeaux 1991). In fact, one jazz historian writing in *the Instrumentalist*, a periodical whose principal audience is conservatory teachers, stressed how the key to garnering institutional support for jazz programs was to educate reticent administrators and budget overseers about how jazz was emphatically not popular music:

> The moral of the story is, don't assume that anyone understands the differences between jazz and pop. If you run into resistance establishing a jazz curriculum or in trying to obtain funding for a jazz concert series, remember those who hold the purse strings might be withholding the money only because they are confused about what jazz is and because they see the music as so commercially successful and plentiful that it does not need their patronage. They may also see it as not warranting study because pop music by definition is not serious (Gridley 1987).

Ironically, the very emergence of a symbolic economy within jazz as a restricted subfield that celebrates its commercially untainted "purity" has largely contributed to its continued existence, and by extension commercial viability, both as a field of academic study and as a part of the national cultural patrimony that enjoys support from governmental and

non-governmental cultural organizations. As Scott DeVeaux observed of the trumpeter and director of the prestigious and well-funded Jazz at Lincoln Center program, "Wynton Marsalis may pride himself on his refusal to 'sell out,' but that aura of artistic purity is an indisputable component of his commercial appeal" (DeVeaux 1991, 530). As jazz has become more closely connected with and dependent on governmental, educational, and other institutions, it has, in Bourdieu's terms, become more heteronomous – that is, the subfield of musical production has become more dependent upon the operant systems of capital in the larger, intersecting fields. While Bourdieu generally uses "heteronomous" to signal the influence of economic capital against (or at least in addition to) that of symbolic capital within the smaller field, I believe that in the case of jazz this is not the principal source of extra-field influence. Rather, the subfield of jazz has become increasingly shaped by the pull of symbolical capital within the field of class relations (the vertical axis in Bourdieu's original diagram). University positions, participation in international festivals with corporate and non-profit sponsors, and "cultural heritage" organizations like Marsalis' are the coin of the realm that allow jazz its continued presence and vitality, and while these certainly carry favorable economic consequences, they also entail a set of relationships more homologous with the traditional institutions of power and prestige within the larger field of class relations.

Música popular in the field of cultural production

Argentine *música popular* schools do not seem to be in any immediate "danger" of accumulating the kind of prestige (and its concomitant obligations) that North American jazz has experienced. Nonetheless, despite the clear and significant differences in the extent

and success with which these *música popular* schools and their jazz-based North American counterparts have become inserted within the larger symbolic and political economies of prestige, I believe that much of the historical context tracing jazz's move into these institutional spaces can be instructive in understanding the Argentine case. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the three separate genres of music that converged to constitute *música popular* as it would be taught in the EMPA occupied very different sociocultural spaces and constellations of meaning during their respective moments of greater popular visibility, consumption, and importance. Yet by the mid-1960s, none of them occupied anything like a hegemonic position within the national cultural industry, and partially as a result, new social spaces began to emerge characterized by a discourse valorizing jazz, tango, and *folklore* under very similar terms to that of modern jazz in the U.S. For example, historian and journalist Sergio Pujol characterized the record label Trova, founded in 1963, as "a little bit of everything, always with a well-tuned and demanding criteria of *artistic selection, 'uncontaminated,'* [economically] disinterested: bossa, *proyección folklórica*, modern tango, and jazz." (Pujol 2004, 249).

It is important to remember that each of these musics had, previous to this discursive turn against "contaminating" economic interest, enjoyed some extent of popularity and a period of relative lucre within the Argentine culture industry. Tango's "Golden Age," from roughly 1920-1940, was a period of fame and wide popular appeal for tango musicians who enjoyed regular work in a wide variety of venues, from cabarets and *café-concerts* to live radio performances to (until the advent of sound film in 1930) cinemas (Collier, Haas, and Azzi 1997; Sierra 1985, 111-119). *Folklore* as a mass-mediated and industrially produced genre came to prominence with the massive internal rural-to-urban

migration starting during the mid-1940s. Particularly with the support of Perón's government, who were anxious to garner and ensure the continued support of this newly urban proletariat, *folklore* musicians benefited enormously from state-sponsored radio diffusion and quotas, and in 1950 a record by Antonio Tormo, a *folklore* singer, became the first in Argentina to sell a million copies (Vila 1991). While jazz never occupied an equivalent place in the national imaginary, jazz musicians in Argentina did enjoy a period of popularity and regular, reliable work from roughly 1920 through 1930, when they played alongside tango orchestras in alternating fashion in cabarets and clubs, and in frequent radio performances (Ferrer 1977, 145-146; Pujol 2004, 26).

By the mid-1960s, though, all three of these genres had passed from mass popularity into musics whose publics constituted subcultures, and increasingly (in the urban center of Buenos Aires, at least) those subcultures overlapped. Thus by the time the first schools of *música popular* emerged in the mid-1980s, it was, like American jazz, a quasi-Adornian discourse of anti-commercialism and the value of autonomous art that bought their entry into the formal state-sponsored conservatory system.

Diego Fischermann, a music critic who writes about jazz, tango, and *folklore* for the leftist daily *Página/12* has even suggested that *música popular* is no longer an appropriate term for the music that is often produced under that category in Buenos Aires; he argues that the social space that prioritizes dedicated and often educated listening and eschews dancing or any other functional use for this music is reason enough to necessitate an alternative classification. Furthermore, he claims that the public that is most closely associated with this new music is one that, a generation or two ago, would have been more likely to be avid consumers of classical music: a left-leaning, university-educated elite. In view of these facts,

he proposes that the term "*música artística de tradición popular*" (art music from the popular tradition) – as a more accurate alternative to *música popular* (Fischermann 2004, 33-34). This idea seems not to have generated any significant support, however, either among musicians or fellow critics, as the term "*música popular*" remains very much in use.

Nonetheless, professors and students alike in these schools are clearly interested in acquiring a symbolic position of prestige equivalent to that of elite concert music. When bandoneonist and EMPA founder Rodolfo Mederos told me that he believed that Bach, had he been born in twentieth century Argentina, would doubtless have played bandoneón and led his own tango *orquesta típica* (Chapter 4), he was essentially arguing for a homology between European concert music and the tango. This observation was not merely a passing fancy, either; Mederos repeats the contention on his professional website (Mederos). Students and professors alike are also clearly aware of the potential benefits of fostering a closer relationship between *música popular* and sources of political and economic power. Many professors and student groups in both schools have put out albums and performed at cultural centers whose financing was at least partially underwritten by various governmental sources of funding. In fact, the collaborative final project that the first cohort to graduate from the Falla program produced was a double CD, *Primera Siembra*, for which they managed, independent of the conservatory, to obtain funding support from the Fondo Nacional de las Artes (National Fund for the Arts).

Of course, however significant some of these discursive and political moves may be in signaling a degree of rapprochement between the fields of academic *música popular* and European classical music, they are still far from structural equivalency. While *folklore*, tango and jazz musicians and fans during the 1970s and 1980s embraced notions of these genres as

a parallel if popular autonomous art, policy makers within the music education system were far slower to respond to that notion. The National Conservatory had long had a bandoneón professor, for example, but bandoneón students studied only art music repertoire until Professor Ricardo Fiorio joined the faculty and changed the curriculum to include tango music for the first time in 2004 (Fiorio 2006, p.c.). Lilián Saba, while a piano student at the same conservatory in the mid-1970s, also worked at the time as an accompanist for a folkloric dance company. She recalled that, while practicing some of this folk repertoire in an empty conservatory classroom, "one of the administrative staff – one of the more savvy ones – came to shut the door for me and tell me 'it's not in your best interest if they hear you playing that[103]"" (Saba 2007, p.c.).

By the period of my field research it would have been quite unusual to hear of classical conservatories that outright discouraged playing *música popular* in the way that Saba described – after all, the entire Falla program exists within a larger classically oriented conservatory, and many faculty and students at both schools teach or have taught in classical programs as well. Nonetheless, the legal systems of qualifications and their resultant degrees of access to teaching positions, grants and sponsored performance opportunities – part of what I termed the system of political authority in Chapter 3, and which I believe is roughly analogous to Bourdieu's vertical axis in the field of class relations – do not treat the symbolic capital of the *música popular* and classical music subfields equally. Thus far symbolic capital within the *música popular* subfield is not easily or entirely convertible either into economic capital nor significant levels of prestige and influence in the larger field of class relations. A full-time teaching appointment at either school does not net a living wage; all of the faculty

[103] "Una de las rectoras, de las más piolas, me vino a decir 'No te conviene que te escuchen tocar eso.'"

at both programs supplement their income with outside teaching, recording, or performing jobs or other professional activity (Cohen 2006 p.c., Sima 2007 p.c.). Despite the programs' nominal parity with equivalent classical music programs in their respective administrative structures, faculty whose own training and formal credentials are not from within that classical system experience unfair treatment. For example, there are the sometimes months-long bureaucratic struggles that Falla professors suffered before they had their qualifications recognize by the state, including at least one case of a teacher who waited a year to receive his first payment for a course he had been teaching (Chapter 3). Under the provincial system in place at EMPA, many positions were classified as "*difícil cobertura*" (literally 'difficult to cover', in practice a designation roughly equivalent with adjunct in the U.S. university system), which allowed non-degreed teachers to qualify for the position but did not offer guarantees against their position changing or being eliminated in the future. Many faculty members teach under this designation full time for years at a time.

Furthermore, with the exception of students in the Formación Docente (teacher training) track at EMPA, there was little guarantee for students that their degrees would result in any significant change in their employability upon graduating; outside of these schools the field of popular music remains one where academic credentials are given little importance, and the main determinant of one's success is musical ability. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the EMPA program has incredibly high attrition rates; while I was unable to obtain precise figures from the administration several students in their final year of study estimated that less than a quarter of those students who began the program with them had continued it to the final year (Barreto 2006 p.c., Baigorria 2006 p.c.). In fact, many of the students in the performance program expressed little concern with whether they

graduated or not, and it was common for students to gradually begin playing professionally in various contexts during their time as students and, as their professional demands increased, spend less time and place less importance on their coursework and exams.

There is additionally the question of whether this move toward anti-commercialism and a symbolic economy that values aesthetic processes and audience behavior that are more generally associated with elite cultural forms are accompanied by a drift upward in socioeconomic class status. Is this move to institutionalize, codify, and provide state sanction for popular music in the end merely another case of elite culture appropriating the musical symbols of a subaltern Other or a nativist exoticism that claims discursive authority over the presence of the rural and working classes in the national imaginary?

Bourdieu noted that there was an often overlooked element of class privilege in most bohemian and avant-garde artistic pursuits, since

> the propensity to move towards the economically most risky positions, and above all the capacity to persist in them (a condition for all avant-garde undertakings which precede the demands of the market)…seem to depend to a large extent on possession of substantial economic and social capital (Bourdieu 1993, 67).

I do not want to understate the class privilege that students and teachers in these schools of *música popular* enjoy. The virtue of their having access to postsecondary education in the nation's capital, and the means to live close enough to it to make daily travel to the schools feasible is significant in a country with substantial poverty, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. Nonetheless, I think Bourdieu's claim does bear some qualifying and contextualizing given the particular economic realities of post-crisis Argentina. The fact that these schools, like all state-sponsored postsecondary institutions in Argentina, do not charge

tuition obviously makes them far more economically accessible than similar private institutions. So too do measures that both schools, but particularly the EMPA have taken to reduce incidental costs to students: the Centro de Estudiantes-led decision to provide course materials at a very minimal cost, often two or three pesos for a year's *cuaderno*, and the provision of instruments for in-school use. While in theory this latter measure would permit a student who could not afford an instrument of his or her own to nonetheless pursue music studies, in a practical sense this of course would mean the student could not practice at home or perform outside of school, and his or her progress would be extremely limited.

The EMPA's curricular restructuring to include a Ciclo Básico and eliminate all entrance requirements clearly has had an even more significant impact in shaping not only the size, but also the demographics of the student population. While most of the students I met in the Falla program were from middle-class or lower-middle class backgrounds, the EMPA's take-all-comers policies, coupled with its location in the poorer, more industrial outskirts of the capital city meant that it attracted a wider socioeconomic range of students. "We get kids from all over here," guitar teacher Aníbal Maidana explained. "From the students from Barrio Norte who have had years of private lessons to kids from Villa Lugano who you'll see on the weekends playing for coins on the trains"[104] (Maidana 2007 p.c.).

There are also larger structural differences in the field of class relations and the field of power in early 21st-century Argentina that further problematize Bourdieu's assumptions about the role of class in decisions to pursue economically unviable forms of art. Argentina suffered a massive economic crisis in late 2001 that had profound social effects across all

[104] Barrio Norte is the wealthier, northern section of the capital city. Villa Lugano, like Avellaneda, is a poorer industrial municipality in the southern *conurbano* (peri-urban zone).

social strata. The devaluation of the peso effectively decimated middle class savings, and during the worst periods of 2002 more than half the country fell under the poverty line and unemployment reached higher than 25 percent (Felix 2002). During this same period, enrollment in EMPA ballooned, and as tango director Javier Cohen explained, the new influx of students was not so much a population who had the economic stability to explore risky career paths, but rather students who cynically faced a new reality where there were no career paths that were not equally risky:

> Young people today see a menu of options so twisted, so unattractive, that they say 'All right, is there a possibility that I'll finish my degree in architecture and end up working in a supermarket? Sure. Or driving a taxi? Sure, that's possible.' So, okay: in that case whatever I do is going to be vocational. It's like it takes away your fear (Cohen 2004, p.c.)

In fact, when I met him in 2003, Pablo "El Colo" Dichiera, the guitarist in la Biyuya, told me he was living precisely this situation: his father was an architect who had lost his job in the wake of the crisis, and was making ends meet driving a taxi. He had two brothers, one of whom owned a small *kiosco* (corner shop), and the other of whom was nearly finished with an electrical engineering degree. At the time, Dichiera was studying tango at EMPA and teaching guitar lessons out of his home, "and was the only one making any money. So I said to myself, if I'm going to fucking starve, I'm going to fucking starve doing something that I like.[105] And since then they haven't bothered me about it" (Dichiera 2003, p.c.).

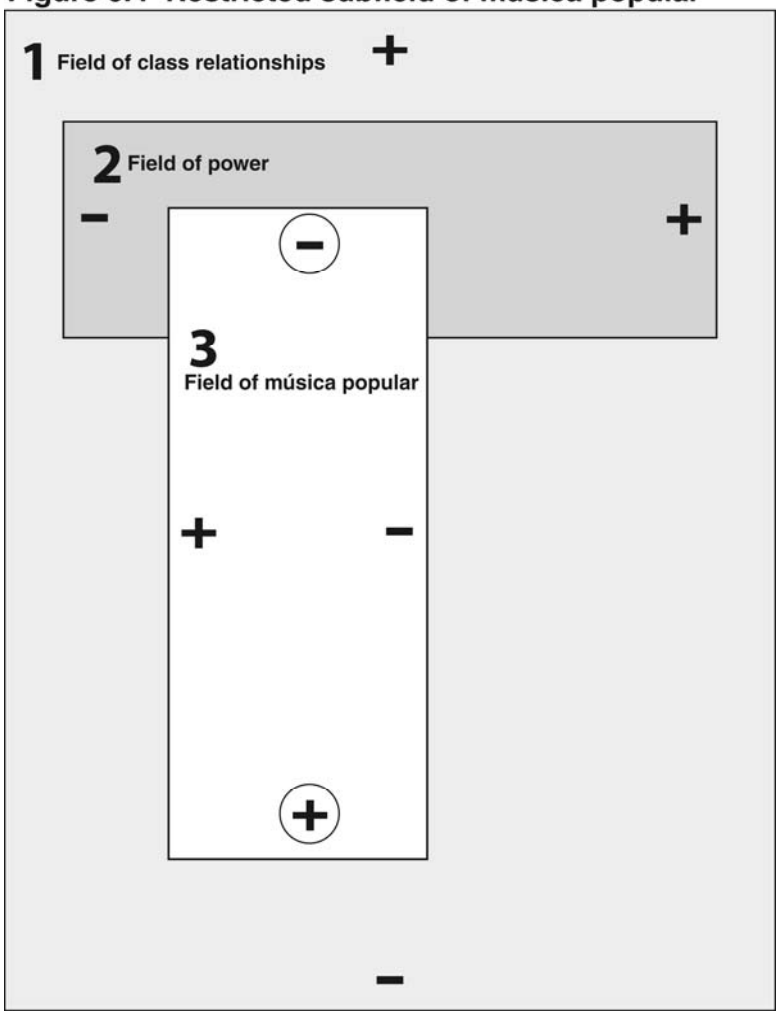
How then do we account for this dynamic in terms of the field of cultural production? Like the case of modern jazz, it is clearly necessary to recognize that the subfield of *música popular* encompasses a much broader range of class identities than Bourdieu's field. But there is a second dynamic change that is equally important: the

[105] "Así me dije, si me voy a cagar de hambre, me voy a cagar de hambre hacienda algo que me guste."

creation of schools of *música popular* has entailed increasing insertion into bureaucratic governmental structures, effectively decreasing the field's autonomy as formal degrees, government grants and other forms of prestige have become increasingly important. This desire to move upward in the field of class relations (and into the field of power) has not been entirely successful, however. Institutional and extra-institutional neglect or malfeasance left EMPA students unable to attend classes and teachers with reduced salaries for six months. A teacher credentialing system unwilling or unable to recognize popular musicians' professional experience as a qualifying factor for teaching popular music left professors without the job security that their classical-system counterparts enjoyed. Students studied toward degrees that had little bearing on their professional aspirations, and as a result were far less interested in the degree itself than in the skills they learned along the way.

In short, students and professors in these programs are profoundly aware that, however well they may prepare students to play *música popular*, these new institutional spaces do not by any means guarantee greater degrees of political, economic, or symbolic capital in the larger field of power. As a result, the subfield of *música popular's* own symbolic economy has reacted in such a way as to favor more populist politics and subject positions, valorizing anti-commercial and anti-hegemonic cultural projects. Effectively, the positive and negative poles in this subfield's own symbolic economy relative to the field of class relations has reversed (See Figure 6.4).

Figure 6.4 Restricted subfield of música popular



Students and professors alike gain in in-group respect and prestige not by acquiring degrees or selling hit albums, but by creating music that reflects and celebrates a counter-hegemonic subject position, and by choosing anti-commercial means of mediation and distribution through which to share it. When student ensembles choose to play in small concert venues allied with leftist political organizations or run as cooperatives (as all of the groups discussed in Chapter 5 do regularly), or when professors choose to downplay their own structural and discursive authority in the classroom to encourage students to find their own aesthetic approaches, or when these musicians make aesthetic choices that prioritize

experimentalism over commercial viability, these are ways of socially performing a position against the field of power. I believe hey are not mere consequences of a failure to take more immediately lucrative or authoritative options, but deliberate decisions to eschew them in favor of in-group symbolic capital.

At the same time, the pull of the economic and political forces from the fields of power and class relations remain intact. The underlying tension between the pull upward (a desire for greater political capital) and the pull downward (a desire for greater symbolic capital in the restricted subfield) characterized many of the conflicts between students, faculty, administration and provincial authorities that I witnessed during my fieldwork in two of these institutions.

Ultimately, Bourdieu's formulation of intersecting fields of influence, when modified in the ways that I have outlined, can be a valuable heuristic tool for conceptualizing the conflicting interests and struggles that shape musical practice, aesthetics, and ideology in this emergent subcultural space. Institutional without being hegemonic, embracing populist ideology, yet idealizing principles of autonomous art, *música popular* within academic institutions is a conflicted, complex and dynamic musical subculture that requires an equally dynamic and conflict-based analytic approach to understand the forces that shape it.

Conclusion

Even proponents of formal popular music education have recognized that the prospect of a school of popular music necessarily entails adaptation of the institution, the popular culture from which it draws, or both. As Wayne Bowman has observed, "if popular music's meaning and identity are fundamentally unsettled, a music education profession that takes such music seriously can scarcely evade unsettledness itself" (Bowman 2004, 38). My research period in the EMPA was characterized by nothing if not an institutional unsettledness, and while the Falla program seemed relatively harmonious and internally consistent, my return visit in 2008 suggested that their move to a space they shared with the classical program had somewhat disrupted their delicate balance between bureaucratic necessities and informal and flexible approaches to teaching and making music. I undertook this study because I believed that an ethnographic approach would provide insight into the ways that even formal state institutions are not static, but rather dynamic sites where cultural values are negotiated and contested. If anything, my project was inhibited by identifying a field research site that was too much in flux, rather than too little, to understand the ways that it functioned as an institutional culture. My mid-project addition of the Falla as a second field research site was at first motivated by necessity, but did ultimately afford me a comparative perspective that offered useful insights into the connection between power structures and musical aesthetics.

If popular culture and conservatory culture are not mutually exclusive, then neither are they entirely compatible. I believe that ultimately the Falla and EMPA programs have developed identities as institutional cultures that represent different levels of compromise

between these two sets of interests, and that in turn these cultures have produced musicians with equivalently divergent musical aesthetics. While the EMPA may have started as a supplement to the conservatory system, it has over time developed into something of an anti-conservatory – its open and limitless admissions policy and history of outspoken criticism of the provincial education authorities have resulted in several generations of students now for whom the notion of *música popular* is inseparable from populist political activism.

Some teachers and students expressed frustration to me about the ways that musical instruction within the school had become more limited in scope as the students and teachers found themselves devoting ever more time and energy to political activity just to ensure the school's basic functioning. But many students – including graduates who have active professional careers as musicians – also pointed to the activist politics as just as formative a part of their EMPA education as the classroom experience. Ezequiel, a member of the rock-*folklore* band Arbolito, observed in a newspaper interview that the band "lived that whole period of conflict in the EMPA . . . and it was formative . . .when 150 people get together on a little patio in order to think about what to do, or cut off streets and all play music together in order to protest, it toughens you up in a lot of ways" (Paz 2009). Arbolito has, like the bands discussed in Chapter 5, not drifted away from its populist politics as it has gained wider professional credibility, recording and touring internationally. They have been actively involved in political causes including human rights campaigns and associations with indigenous groups.

The Falla program, on the other hand, exists as something of an annex to the classical conservatory program. It may not enjoy the same level of economic support or

participation in the conservatory governance as its classical counterpart, but its administrators have generally found unobtrusive ways to exercise a relatively high degree of autonomy in determining their curricular content and faculty makeup, and shaping a unique cultural identity distinct from the larger conservatory. This has partially been possible because the program's director, Marta Sima, has been willing to act as intermediary between the school's spheres of cultural authority and political authority, and partially because the teachers, administrators and even students in question have developed a sense of their own position as popular musicians that is less determined by an opposition to hegemonic structures than by an interest in (re)constructing idealized folkways. Theirs is ultimately a more socially conservative project than EMPA's; while the program does intend to open up an equivalent space within a "high culture" institution for popular musics, it does not fundamentally re-imagine the role of the conservatory in relation to the larger public. Their students enter as conservatory-trained musicians, and while there they acquire a wide knowledge of the rural and urban popular traditions of their own country. But to the extent that "the institutional popular," such as it exists in the Falla, stands in opposition to anything, it is mainly the commercial mass culture industry, and that opposition is couched in quasi-Adornian terms that would be quite unthreatening to most high-culture institutions.

Both of these programs were able to originally garner government support by framing their project in terms that appealed to a broad sense of cultural nationalism, but ultimately I believe that these appeals were more politically expedient than part of any deeply felt nationalist ideology. Even Juan Falú, whose *folklore* classes perpetuated a national imaginary of a quasi-federal cognitive map of rural music culture where political regions and representative genres correspond, and whose musical aesthetics were considerably more

conservative than many of his EMPA counterparts, maintained a healthy skepticism for too vigorous attempts to officialize these vernacular cultures. I believe he must have understood the slippery semiotic vagueness of an idealized national imaginary. He was, after all, one of the numerous *folklore* musicians forced into exile during the dictatorship by the same military government that proudly adopted romanticized, "traditional" *folklore* extolling the virtues of gaucho culture. The boundary between celebratory cultural nationalism and xenophobia has at times been blurry in Argentine political history. I think both the Falla and EMPA programs' insistence on a notion of national and local *música popular* that valorizes innovation, individual idiosyncrasy, egalitarianism, and populist identity reflect a savvy awareness of the fraught potential of cultural nationalism.

Ramifications and Contributions

Institutional ethnographies of music schools such as Kingsbury (1988) and Nettl (1995) provide fine examples of the ways that ethnography can illuminate implicit systems of cultural values, politics and ideology even within the supposedly explicit logic of cultural bureaucracies. This study further complicates those models, however, by positing that even formal institutions can be sites where cultural values are in flux, and actively contested by individuals and groups with differing interests and relationships of power. In this regard perhaps this study's clearest and most broadly applicable theoretical contribution is my proposed dual systems of authority. Pierre Bourdieu has been the strongest single theoretical influence in shaping my approach to these institutional cultures. His contributions are at times implicit; I understand many of the bureaucratic regulations, curricular guidelines, and relationships of political power within these institutions to function

like Bourdieu's *habitus* as "structuring structures" which individuals can strategically decide to obey or subvert. Other aspects of Bourdieu's influence are more explicit: his notion of cultural capital informs my model for a system of cultural authority, and of course his field of cultural production allowed me to posit a spatial way to conceptualize the tensions and competing symbolic and economic interests at work in the field of *música popular*. While I clearly respect Bourdieu's capacity to theorize social systems in dynamic and oppositional relationships, I also hope that my application of his field concept in Chapter 6 has helped to illustrate some of its limits and necessary adaptations if it is to contribute meaningfully to our understanding of cultural practices outside of the "field of power."

Part of my interest in this research topic stems from my hope that cultural critique of systems of music learning can better inform and improve institutional music education. I do believe there are considerations which this case study brings to light that could productively inform institutional practice more broadly. But before proceeding to them I also wish to emphasize some of the ways that this study has intensified my reservations about the viability of broad prescriptive pronouncements on the topic. The EMPA and Falla had dramatically different institutional cultures which I believe were the result not only of the different personalities and approaches of key decision makers in each school, but also the different regional and local political systems in which the schools operated. The differences between either of these political systems and any other given institutional context embedded in different national and local webs of political power, cultural policy, and overlapping sets of popular, folkloric, and "high art" music cultures could be great enough to render any of these observations inapplicable for a particular case.

Nonetheless, several observations from this study seem potentially broadly relevant. Academic programs in local popular musics have become increasingly prevalent across Latin America in the last decade; they have come to play a significant role in shaping local popular music practice, garnering the attention of popular musicians and academics alike. Bridging the gap between these two groups may prove difficult; at the first Latin American Congress in Academic Training in Popular Music in Villa María I noticed a clear division in the conference papers and presentations. On one hand, scholars from anthropology and ethnomusicology (including myself) proposed relatively synthetic macro-analyses of the situated cultural meanings of the musics they studied, but seldom offered perspectives that might change the way teachers and students made that music. On the other hand, practitioners – performers, composers, and ensemble directors – offered sessions on practical application of pedagogical and performative techniques specific to a given musical tradition, typically without an explicit analysis of how and why that particular set of musical aesthetics served the cultural values and purposes of a given institutional setting.

I think the lack of connection between these two camps is demonstrative of one of the principal challenges facing the teachers, administrators, and musicians who would re-imagine institutional music education as a more populist and inclusive cultural space. If my two cases studies are any indication, effective teachers of popular musicians are most successful at constructing an informal system I have called cultural authority, and transmitting the social and musical values associated with it.

This ought not to be surprising; I believe similar systems of authority, ways of performing cultural competence and generating attendant social capital have long been part of many functioning cultural and subcultural scenes. State-sponsored schools have a

particularly visible and intransigent sort of institutionality to them, but this does not mean that other kinds of social organization, from music venues and media outlets, musicians' unions to informal networks of associates and friends do not also constitute spheres where cultural authority, whether hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, might operate. The difficulty lies in reconciling this system of cultural authority, which in the cases I have observed have been rather egalitarian and flexible, with the more rigid hierarchies of state bureaucracy and political authority.

The relationships between the dual spheres of authority in these two schools could not have been more different. The EMPA ground to a virtual standstill during my fieldwork partially because the system of political authority – both the school's administration and the provincial ministry of education – did not recognize or accept the same ideological purposes as the cultural authority. At the Falla, a more flexible and pragmatic administrator mediated between the sphere of cultural authority and the demands of the larger sphere of political authority. Occasionally, this involved realizing some compromise or restriction of the former sphere, such as ending the after-hours informal *guitarreadas* and wine drinking, but more frequently involved helping teachers and students circumvent bureaucratic restrictions. I think this more harmonious relationship was facilitated by the way their faculty's notion of "the popular," and their relation to it, was more modest and unthreatening than their EMPA counterparts'. EMPA professors observed to me that "what defined [them] was struggle" and encouraged students to make art "with a rifle on the table," necessarily combining popular music and engaging with a populist politics that positioned itself against not only the mass culture industry but also frequently the government. For the faculty of the Falla program, on the other hand, the main goal was the vindication and preservation of

vernacular expressive culture that they felt was threatened mainly by the mass culture industry. While they frequently expressed frustration about the state bureaucracy's inflexibility and inability to comprehend the specific and unique demands of their program, they did not couch these frustrations in terms of a fundamental opposition.

I hope that this study's level of ethnographic specificity about how the concept of *música popular* is constructed and deployed locally can productively contribute to English language scholarship on popular culture. The "popular" has for many neo-Marxist cultural critics been a category of scholarly inquiry generally restricted to the uses (and misuses) and meanings attributed to the products of the mass culture industry. Birmingham-school approaches to this material constitute a helpful corrective to Adornian understandings of the mass culture industry as a unilateral force for strengthening capitalist hegemony. But I agree with Georgina Born that cultural studies' historical neglect of "professional and proto-professional cultural production itself as a site of politicization and as a mediation of wider social and political currents" has resulted in theories of "the popular" that are too willing to overlook ways beyond mere use and consumption that popular and populist culture matter (Born 1993, 269).

Examining jazz, tango, and *folklore* in their historical context, one might argue that for a popular music to become compatible with institutional music education, it must first cease to be popular. I think there is some element of truth to this; even beyond the pervasive influence of Adornian dismissal of popular music within conservatory culture, I think that the anti-commercial stance that teachers of *música popular* are able to adopt does allow the creation of new subject positions for these (in Born's terms) "proto-professional" musicians. It requires a certain suspension of historically informed disbelief to understand

tango, *folklore* or jazz as anti-commercial musics, but this is considerably more viable considering their current lack of commercial popularity. Furthermore, maybe the notion of *música popular* as anti-commercial, despite (former) mass popularity of these genres serves as a useful fiction that allows for a new subjectivity as a cultural producer.

I agree with Adorno that there is no space for a vernacular culture entirely independent of the culture industry. But these programs have, I believe, provided the tools to engender alternate subjectivities and social forms of identification through music. The sets of expressive resources, historical narratives, and community nexus that these schools have provided have resulted in groups of musicians like those in Chapter 5 seeking to construct new local sociomusical identities that, while not independent of hegemonic cultural structures, at least act as eddies somewhat separate from the pull of the cultural mainstream. Michael Dawson has proposed that jazz and other Black popular culture served to create counterhegemonic "counterpublics" (Dawson 1994). I believe that the social spaces and shared identities created, performed, and experienced through *música popular* work in a similar fashion for the Argentine youth who have coalesced in and through these institutions.

Appendix – Curricular Plans

Conservatorio Superior de Música "Manuel de Falla"
Technical Degree in Tango and Folkloric Music

Course title	Length of study
Performance classes	
Applied Instrument Lessons	4 years
Ensemble (Tango ensemble and *folklore* ensemble)	2 years
Popular song (*canto popular* – folkloric repertoire)	1 semester
Percussion workshop	1 semester
Music theory/composition/history	
Tango and folklore (history and stylistic traits)	2 years
General Music History	1 year
Harmony	1 year
Interpretation of Chord Symbol Harmony (*Cifrados*)	1 semester
Transcriptions	1 semester
Versions	1 semester
Applied Composition	1 semester
Seminar	1 year
Capstone Project	1 year
Academic courses	
Musical Semiotics	1 semester
Social and Political History of Argentina and Latin America	1 semester
Applied Music Technology (*Informática*)	1 semester
Sociology and Anthropology of Culture	1 semester
Problems of Contemporary Aesthetics and Critical Theory	1 semester
Legislation and Musical Production	1 semester
Argentine Ethnomusicology	1 semester
Tango, Folklore and Literature	1 semester
Tango, Folklore and Theater Arts	1 semester
Professional Ethics and Ontology	1 semester
Tango or Folklore Dance Workshop	1 semester
Ethnomusicology elective:	1 semester
-Ethnomusicology of Latin America and the Caribbean	
-Argentine Organology	
-Popular Myths, Ceremonies, and Festivals	
Language elective group A	3 semesters
-English, Portuguese, or French	
Language elective group B	3 semesters
-Guaraní or Quichua	

Escuela de Música Popular de Avellaneda

Technical Degree in Popular Music

First Year

1. Applied Instrument Lessons: Tango
2. Applied Instrument Lessons: Jazz
3. Applied Instrument Lessons: Folklore
4. Music Theory *(Lenguaje Musical)*
5. Ear Training I
6. Vocal and Instrumental Ensemble Class
7. Body Training Workshop
8. Music History (General)
9. Harmonic Instrument (Piano or Guitar)

Second Year

1. Applied InstrumentLessons II (Genre of choice)[106]
2. Technical Elements of Genre I
3. History of Genre I
4. Genre-specific Ensemble Class
5. Ear Training II
6. Harmonic Instrument (Piano or Guitar)

Third Year

1. Applied Instrument Lessons III (Genre of choice)
2. Technical Elements of Genre II
3. History of Genre II
4. Genre-specific Ensemble Class II
5. Latin American Music I
6. Acoustics

Fourth Year

1. Applied Instrument Lessons IV (Genre of choice)
2. Technical Elements of Genre III
3. Genre Ensemble Class III
4. Electroacoustic Media
5. Latin American Music II
6. Audiovisual Media

[106] In the first year, students study their primary instrument with a teacher from each department. In the second year, they choose to specialize in either jazz, tango, or *folklore*. All courses in the second year and beyond indicated with "genre" have separate courses for each genre.

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